

# A HISTORY OF ENGLISH PROSE RHYTHM

BY  
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

M A OXON HON LL D ABERD HON D LITT DURH  
FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY, HONORARY FELLOW OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD  
PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Nihil, quod proxa scriptum non redigi [potest] in quaedam  
versiculorum genera vel in membra Neque enim loqui  
possumus nisi e syllabis brevibus ad longas, ex quibus pedes  
fiunt —QUINTILIAN, *Inst. Orator* IX iv 32, 61

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1912

COPYRIGHT



## PREFACE

THE work which I am now attempting, and which was, in an indirect fashion, promised or aspired to in the *History of English Prosody* (iii 20 and elsewhere), may be said to be a carrying out of lines laid down a good deal earlier than those of the *History of Prosody* itself. It is now some six and thirty years since Lord Morley of Blackburn, then editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, after most kindly honouring a draft at sight which I had drawn upon him, uninvited and unintroduced, in the shape of a paper on Charles Baudelaire, asked me to write something else on "English Prose Style,"<sup>1</sup> a matter on which, though always interested in it from the time when, as a mere boy, I read De Quincey, I had never yet formulated any very precise ideas. About this time, or shortly after, I came into abundant practice as a reviewer, and had to keep the subject before me, while, some years later still, the late Mr. Kegan Paul asked me to deal still more elaborately with it in the *Preface* to a collection of Extracts.<sup>2</sup> By this time I had systematised my ideas on the subject to some not inconsiderable extent, and the idea of formal scansion of English prose (if I had known of Bishop Hurd's attempts I certainly had forgotten all about them) first regularly suggested itself.<sup>3</sup> Of this I

<sup>1</sup> "Modern English Prose," *F R*, February 1876

<sup>2</sup> *Specimens of English Prose Style* (London, 1885). Both this paper and the preceding are reprinted in *Miscellaneous Essays* (London, 1892)

<sup>3</sup> I did not know Mason's book, *v. sup*, till much later

have never left hold since, being much stimulated by the regular and professional study of the remarks of Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> Quintilian, and others on prose rhythm in their respective languages. A further stimulus was also administered, perhaps a decade later, by that remark of Dr Lawrence's to which I draw fuller attention elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> But the causes which prevented me from undertaking other things—see *Prefaces* to the *Histories of Criticism* and of *English Prosody*—and then these things themselves, kept it back, not to mention that, for some time, there was a chance of the subject being taken up by a friend of excellent competence. He, however, dropped it,<sup>3</sup> not, I believe, being able to arrive at conclusions sufficiently definite to satisfy him, and on finding that he had finally given up the notion, I threw out the hint above referred to. It now remains to be seen whether I shall be able to make something of the matter. The attempt, if made, may not be quite useless, and in making it I shall certainly be able also to administer divers delectable draughts of example. The expense of my own time and trouble at least has not been grudged, though the amount of both demanded by the task cannot easily be overrated.

There is hardly more than one point of fact on which I may say a further prefatory word. Although I have no fault to find with the reception accorded to the *Histories* above mentioned—though I have rather to acknowledge a most generous welcome—it appeared to me, in both cases, that a somewhat extravagant, not to say erroneous, meaning was attached, by some readers, to the word "History." They appeared to demand, not only a complete account of the *ῥητι*, but an exhaustive examination of the *διόρισ*.

<sup>1</sup> I had not "taken up" the *Rhetoric* or the *Poetics* at Oxford, because there was in my time an idea, encouraged by some tutors, that neither was, as book, *bona* in certain high quarters.

<sup>2</sup> *V inf* p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Not wholly (*v inf* p. 464 note), but as the subject of a complete history or treatise.

Now, on the possibility, and still more on the use, of this latter, in regard to the majority of subjects, I am something of a sceptic, and even when I acknowledge the felicity of knowing the causes of things, I think it well to know the things themselves first. I do not, however, intend to neglect theory altogether, and some generalising suggestions will be found in the Interchapters which summarise the successive Periods, as well as in the Conclusion, and especially in Appendix III. But I wish chiefly to bring out the *facts* of this interesting and much neglected matter, and to indicate the additional delectation which attends the study of them. To sport with Amaryllis (if Amaryllis be poetry) may be best, but there remains a Neæra in prose, and the tangles of her hair are not to be despised by the sportsman-lover.

As I approach, contemplating it still from whatever distance, the end of these studies of metre and rhythm which I may never reach, that sense of the "unending endless quest,"<sup>1</sup> which I suppose all but very self-satisfied and self-sufficient persons feel, impresses itself more and more upon me. An, I suppose, youthful reviewer of some different but kindred work of mine not very long ago, reproached me with ignorance or neglect of the fact that he and his generation had quite given up positive deliverances in criticism. They regarded it (I think he said) as hopeless and wrong to "pin" something or other "to the rainbow beauty of what was really a miracle of incrustation." The proceeding appeared to me to be difficult, if not impossible, and the phrase to be really a miracle of *galimatias*. But, as a fact, I hope that almost all who have read me will acquit me of the impudence or the folly of thinking that I could say even an *interim* last word on the secrets of rhythmical charm, whether in the

<sup>1</sup>The last words of Longfellow's poem to *Ultima Thule*, his last published work.

slightly more tangible form of verse, or the far more intangible one of prose. Here, as everywhere, and almost more than anywhere, beauty *incipit in mysterio* as well as *exit in mysterium*. Here, and almost more also, it is as when you see a face and say to it with Browning—

Lie back, could thought of mine improve you?

and decide that, if improvement is impossible, the interpretation of the actual charm is equally so. You can get some way towards the secret. The spring of the wing of the nostril, the plunge into the clear pool of the eyes, with its impenetrable background of agate or lapis lazuli, of chrysoprase or avanturine, the sweep of the cheek-edge from ear to chin, the straight descent, or curved and recurved wave, of the profile, the azure net-work of the closed eyelids, "the fringed curtains" at their juncture, the infinite intricacies of the mouth and hair,—ask yourself about any one of these, and you cannot tell why it is beautiful, why the combination of the whole makes a beautiful face. But you can, to some extent, fix for yourself the character of those parts and the composition of that whole, and, so far at least, you are ahead of the mere gazer who stares and "likes grossly."

So it is with literature. You can never get at the final entelechy which differentiates Shelley and Shakespeare from the average versifier, Cluvenus and myself from Pater or from Browne. But you can attend to the feature-composition of the beautiful face, to the quality of the beautiful features, in each of these masters, and so you can dignify and intensify your appreciation of them. That this is best to be done in prose, as in verse, by the application of the foot-system—that is to say, by studying the combinations of the two great sound-qualities which, for my part, I call, as my fathers called them from the beginning, "long" and "short," but which you may call

anything you like, so long as you observe the difference and respect the grouping—I may almost say I know, having observed the utter practical failure of all other systems in verse, and the absence even of any attempt to apply any other to prose

With this I may leave the present essay to its chances, only repeating my acquaintance with two quotations which I made thirty-six years ago when touching, for the first time, the subject of Prose Style generally. One was Nicholas Breton's warning to somebody "not to talk too much of it, having so little of it," and the other, Diderot's epigram on Beccaria's *ouvrage sur le style où il n'y a point de style*. These are, of course, "palpable hits" enough. But you may criticise without being able to create, and you may love beauty, and to the possible extent understand it, without being beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

THE ALHENAËUM, June 15, 1912

<sup>1</sup> It ought not to be necessary, but perhaps is desirable, to emphasise the fact that this attempts only to be a *History of English Prose Rhythm*, illustrated by examples from writers greater and lesser—not a *History of English Prose Style* generally. And of these examples I have (with the kind permission of the publishers and the editor) chosen as many as I could from Sir Henry Craik's *English Prose Selections* (5 vols., London, 1890-96), where the reader will often find useful contexts, many other illustrations, and, as it were, a *hrestomathy* to this *History*. But I have, of course, not confined myself to it even in the later part, while I have constantly re-read books, and some whole authors, to "freshen the atmosphere," and make sure that my examples were exemplary. The passages chosen from Old and Middle English owe nothing to any previous collection, though some of them may necessarily have appeared in one or another. I must apologise for any errors left in foot-division and quantification—things extremely difficult to get right, especially with eyes as weak as mine. In this, and in matters generally ranked as more important, I owe, yet once more, infinite thanks to my old helpers, Professors Ker, Elton, and Gregory Smith.



# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY—OF PROSE RHYTHM GENERALLY, AND OF THE HISTORY OF ITS STUDY

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| The beginnings in Greek and Latin—Aristotle—Demetrius (?)—Dionysius—Quintilian—Others, Cicero—Longinus | I    |

## CHAPTER II

### OLD ENGLISH PROSE RHYTHM

|   |    |
|---|----|
| General characteristics of Old English prose—Its drawbacks and advantages in vocabulary and compounds—Its “synthetic” character—Intermixture of prosaic and poetic style—Latin influence—Passages for examination—Ethelbald’s grant to the Bishop of Worcester—The “Slaying of Cynewulf”—Remarks—Rhythmical effect of inflections—Of compounds, etc.— <i>Um</i> endings, consonant groups, etc.—General word rhythm—Remarks on the rhythm of the composition—And its relations to verse—Absence of alliteration—Alfred’s translations—The tenth century—The <i>Blackling Homilies</i> —Interim summary of prose before Ælfric—Ælfric, the <i>Colloquy</i> —The <i>Homilies</i> —Specimen passages—Remarks on them—Later examples, Wulfstan— <i>Apollonius of Tyre</i> —General survey and summary | 10 |
|---|----|

## CHAPTER III

### THE FORMATION OF PROSE RHYTHM IN MIDDLE ENGLISH BEFORE C 1350

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Importance and difficulty of Early and Middle English in our subject—The <i>Ancren Riwle</i> —Analysis of passages—“The Wooing of Our Lord”—Other twelfth and thirteenth century pieces—General remarks on early Middle English prose—Influence of the Vulgate, and of French prose | 43 |
|---|----|

## CHAPTER IV

## FROM CHAUCER TO MALORY

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| English made a school language—The four prosemen of the late fourteenth century—Wyclif—The Tracts and Sermons—The translation of the Bible—Trevisa—Sir John Mandeville—Chaucer—His various prose pieces—Their somewhat neglected importance—The <i>Parson's Tale</i> —The <i>Tale of Melibee</i> —Its blank verse—The <i>Astrolabe</i> —The <i>Boethius</i> —The fifteenth century—Its real importance—Pecock and the <i>Repressor</i> —His syntax—His compound equivalents—The <i>Paston Letters</i> —Malory—His prose and the earlier verse <i>Morte</i> —Guinevere's last meeting with Lancelot—The Lancelot dirge—The Throwing of Excalibur—His devices—His excellence a rather lonely one—Berners—Style of his romance translations—And contrast of their Prefaces—Fisher | PAGE<br>56 |
| INTERCHAPTER I   | 102        |

## CHAPTER V

## THE FIRST MATURITY—ASCHAM TO HOOKER

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Shorter retrospect—Continuance of rhetorical influence the Cambridge School—Cheke his "bankruptcy" theory—Its fallacy—Wilson and "ink hoin terms"—The excuses— <u>Ascham</u> —Tyndale—The Prayer Book (Cranmer?)—Latimer—Profane translations—Lyly and Euphuism its failure in rhythm—Hooker his achievement—Rhythm sweep—And fingering of particular words—Sidney | 114 |
|--|-----|

## CHAPTER VI

## THE AUTHORISED VERSION AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE ORNATE STYLE

|   |
|---|
| The coming of harvest—The Authorised Version of the Bible—The sixtieth chapter of the <del>book of Isaiah</del> —A V, Septuagint, and Vulgate scanned—Discussion of each—Earlier English versions for comparison Coverdale—The "Bishops"—Remarks on them—Geneva and Douay—A New Testament example, the Chantry passage of <i>1 Cor</i> atrocities of the Revisers—The older versions here—Results of scrutiny—Observation on use of synonyms—Individual writers—Raleigh—Greville—Donne—The palmiest days— <u>Bacon</u> (?)—Burton—Beauties and faults—Milton—Disputes about his prose, and their causes—Close connection of Milton's style with oratory—Some of its faults—Partial foot analysis—Taylor the general high estimate of him—Examples—Rhythmical characteristics— <u>Browne</u> Coleridge's charge against him—Special character of his charm, and special treatment of it required—The |
|---|



|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| finale of <i>Urn Burial</i> —Interim observation on overture—The close of the <i>Garden of Cyrus</i> —Short passages from <i>Religio Medici</i> —From the <i>Hydrotaphia</i> —From the <i>Garden of Cyrus</i> —The <i>Letter to a Friend</i> —And <i>Christian Morals</i> Others perforce omitted | PAGE<br>141 |
|---|-------------|

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CONCURRENCE OF THE PLAIN

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| The charm of seventeenth century ornateness — Glanvill — But such ornateness not for all work—The forging of the plant for this—Ben Jonson—High value of the <i>Discoveries</i> —Hobbes—His eminence and its contrasted character—The “Race” and “Love” passages of <i>Human Nature</i> —Clarendon | 201 |
| INTERCHAPTER II  | 217 |

## CHAPTER VIII

### AUGUSTAN PROSE

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| The prevailing of the plain style—The group of 1630—Distribution of the chapter—Cowley—Dryden—South—Halifax—Temple and his masterpiece—The plainest styles, vulgar and not vulgar—The non vulgarians L'Estrange and Tom Brown—Bunyan—The vulgarians —The effect of abbreviations—Instances from Rymer, etc —Defoe —Swift—The rhythmical character of irony—Addison—Hurd's dealings with his rhythm—His supposed “Addisonian termination” —His general view of Addison's “harmony” —Specimens of Addison himself—Rhythmical analysis of them—Selections of other Queen Anne men necessary —Berkeley —Shaftesbury—Bolingbroke—Letter writers and novelists to be shortly dealt with —Conyers Middleton—Efforts at variety—Adam Smith—Interim observations on this prose—Attempts to raise it—Johnson differ ent views respecting him—His relation to Browne—Characteristics of the Johnsonian style—Burke his oratorical <i>ethos</i> —His declared method—Early examples—Middle—Later—Examples and com ments—Gibbon his peculiarity—Its general effect, and that of the other reformers—The standard Georgian style—Southey | 227 |
| INTERCHAPTER III   | 288 |

## CHAPTER IX

### THE REVIVAL OF RHYTHMICAL ELABORATION

|  |
|--|
| The necessity of reaction—Its causes and bents—Preoccupation of the ground by poetry, the Lake group and Scott—Byron, Shelley, and Keats—The minors Moore— <i>The Epicurean</i> —Return to |
|--|

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Coleridge in <i>Anima Poetae</i> —General descriptive character of these early passages—The three chief pioneers—De Quincey—Specimen phrases and passages, with analysis and comment—The <i>Dream Fugue</i> and the <i>Suspiria</i> the chief quarries—Elaborate rhythm by no means often aimed at elsewhere—Its connection with dream—The <i>Suspiria</i> again—The <i>Autobiography</i> —De Quincey's relation to poetry—Wilson—Landon his characteristics—The relations of his poetry and his prose—His critical utterances on the subject—Results in a "prose grand style"—Specimens—Some general observations—The four kinds of rhythm in relation to prose—I Non prosaic rhythm or poetry—II Hybrid verse prose—III Pure prose highly rhythmized—IV Prose in general | 293  |

## CHAPTER X

### MISCELLANEOUS PROSE, 1820-1860

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| The coexistence of different styles in 1820—Momentary return to Landon—Comparative merits—The "standard" still prevalent, but with a tendency to degradation—Definition of "slovenliness"—Return to examples—Coleridge again—Jeffrey—Note on italics—Chalmers—Note on Irving—Hazlitt—Lamb—Leigh Hunt—Carlyle—Macaulay—The novelists Miss Austen and Peacock—Lord Beaconsfield—Dickens—Thackeray—Newman | 347 |
|--|-----|

## CHAPTER XI

### RUSKIN AND LATER NINETEENTH-CENTURY PROSE

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1843— <i>Modern Painters</i> —Influences on Ruskin's style—His subjects—His practice in verse, and its marks on his prose—Kingsley his pure Ruskinian prose—His "song shape" style—Charlotte Brontë—"George Eliot"—Mr Froude—Matthew Arnold—His peculiar system of repetition—Examples, and discussion of it—Mansel—A false censure corrected—Pater—His quietism—His apes Mr Frederick Myers—Mr Swinburne—The mixed influences in him—Examples in great and little—William Morris—"Wardour Street"—or not?—George Meredith his Meredithism—Stevenson | 391 |
|--|-----|

### CONCLUSION

443

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| APPENDICES (I Stave Prose Poetry—Ossian, Blake, Whitman, etc. II Mason on Prosaic Numbers. III Table of Axioms, Inferences, and Suggestions) | 467 |
|--|-----|

### INDEX

483

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY—OF PROSE RHYTHM GENERALLY, AND OF THE HISTORY OF ITS STUDY

The beginnings in Greek and Latin—Aristotle—Demetrius (?)—  
Dionysius—Quintilian—Others, Cicero—Longinus

THAT it is possible to use prose without knowing or thinking anything about it, is established by one of the great and greatly quoted things which it is now considered unlawful to mention, because everybody is supposed to know them, and which, in the near future of what is now called education, nobody at all will know. That it is possible, and not undesirable, to consider prose almost as curiously as verse itself, is a more contentious proposition. It is, however, certain, on the one hand, that, in the very dawn of criticism, Aristotle, who threw light on so many things, practically started the whole enquiry in which this book is an essay, by his description of prose as "neither possessing metre nor destitute of rhythm",<sup>1</sup> and that, in this context of the *Rhetoric*, he discussed Greek prose scansion with some fulness. It is equally certain that this distinction—one of those which commend themselves, as soon as proposed, to almost every intelligence—was followed, though not probably to any very great extent,<sup>2</sup> by critics both Greek and Latin. And we possess,

<sup>1</sup> τὸ δὲ σχῆμα τῆς λέξεως δεῖ μὴτε ἐμμετρον εἶναι μὴτε ἀρρυθμον (*Rhet.* III. viii. 1). Isocrates, in a treatise of which we have only fragments, seems to have preceded Aristotle, with whom he but in part agrees. See Benseler's edition (Leipzig, 1877), i. 276, or Cope and Sandys on the *Rhetoric*, vol. iii. p. 83 (Cambridge, 1877), and note<sup>1</sup> I next page.

<sup>2</sup> The ordinary run of Greek writers in their "Arts" of rhetoric seem to

in particular, a consideration of Latin prose rhythm by Quintilian, which forms a not unworthy pendant to Aristotle's in regard to Greek. It is unfortunate, no doubt, that, from the nature of the case, these passages are among the obscurest of their respective authors'. Whether we have much certain knowledge as to even the vowel sounds of Greek and Latin, is a matter of grave doubt to some of us, that we have practically no knowledge at all on the almost more important points of their intonation, accentuation, and general pronunciation, is, to some of those some, a certainty.

Partly owing to this, and partly to other causes, Aristotle's brief remarks as to the details of the subject *are* somewhat obscure, and they display a musical-mathematical preoccupation which hardly applies to modern languages, and which has certainly misled some modern enquirers. Others, more wary, must admit that they here see, if not always darkly, yet never more than partly in the antique glass. When Aristotle says that spondaic-dactylic (æ heroic) rhythm is too stately, too little varied, and not well enough adapted to ordinary conversation for prose, that iambic, though thoroughly conversational, is *too* conversational, and not stately enough; and that trochaic is too tripping,<sup>1</sup> we know what he means, though there may be a faint puzzle even here as to how the metre of the *Prometheus* and the *Agamemnon* can be wanting in stateliness. When he says that "the pæon remains," he is providing for us a great door and effectual, but his reasons, if we attend

---

have eschewed it, but the three greatest—the uncertain Demetrius in the *De Interpretatione*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Longinus—do not

<sup>1</sup> Isocrates, on the other hand, seems to have preferred "a mixture of iambic and trochaic." The whole passage, to be also found in Walz among the scholia on Hermogenes, runs thus: "But let not prose be altogether prose, for it would be dry, nor metred, for that would attract too much attention (*καταφανεὲς γάρ*), but let it be mingled with all kinds of metres, especially iambic and trochaic." There are complete trimeters in "the old man eloquent." But we ought to remember that he was groping his way, and that these familiar and simple rhythms are apt to suggest themselves before the ear detects the superiority, for prose, of the combination of them into pæons and other four or even five syllabled feet. In two of the four possible forms the pæon is "a mixture of iambic and trochaic."

too much to them, seem likely to shut that door again, for he says that "heroic" rhythm (spondaic or dactylic) is as one to one (i.e. two longs, or one long and two shorts = half-longs), iambic or trochaic as two to one (long, two halves, and short, one), but the pæon (one long and three shorts) as whole and half (to one). Even after we have arrived at the meaning of this, which is itself not quite sun-clear, a puzzle remains, not indeed insoluble, but a puzzle.<sup>1</sup> For one may ask in vain, in the first place, for an explanation of the precise virtue in the "one and a half to one" relation, and, in the second, what he means by saying that you cannot construct *metre* out of pæons, whereas you certainly can.

There are therefore, and could not but be, difficulties in the way of taking Aristotle as a guide in detail, besides the great one—greater in prose than in verse—that he is speaking of Greek and we of English. But we have at any rate got two great possible lights and leading-strings from him. One is the saying that prose must be neither "emmetric" nor "arrhythmic", the other is the indication of the pæon, or four-syllabled foot, as the base-rhythm.

The mysterious Demetrius, in sections 38 to 43 of his treatise, deals with prose rhythm, basing himself expressly on Aristotle, repeating much from him, and disagreeing with his limitation of the possible pæonic forms. He has, however, an interesting remark on the dignity of Thucydides as attained by the long syllables he uses, which would look as if Demetrius considered not merely the pæon, but its opposite the epitrite,<sup>2</sup> as admissible

<sup>1</sup> The pæon being composed of three short syllables and one long one, "two and a half" might seem to be its equivalent, but Aristotle, as before, is splitting the foot up. Every pæon consists of two halves, in one of which there is a long syllable, while in the other there is not, so that they stand to each other in the relation of three to two, or one and a half to one. Aristotle seems to have recognised only two pæons—that with the long syllable at the beginning, and that with it at the end. In English all forms of the foot occur, but the commonest and most valuable has the long in the *third* place.

<sup>2</sup> One *short* and three *long* as opposed to one *long* and three *short*. The table of feet prefixed to this chapter should be constantly consulted by those to whom the names are not familiar. In the opening sentence of the great *History* which Demetrius quotes, 'Αθηναῖος (with ἐντέτυπος following) is an epitrite by position, and 'Αθηναῖος 'one of itself.

But he thinks that recurrent spondees exceed the bounds of prose. And he does not say much more.

Dionysius also refers to Aristotle—as indeed does Cicero, who naturally attacks the subject, more than others, from the specially elocutionary point of view, and from whose references to it most moderns, in the comparatively few cases in which it was touched, probably in turn derived their suggestions. But the Halicarnassian here, as in not a few other cases, makes the subject his own by a bold advance on the Stagirite. “No rhythm whatever,” he says,<sup>1</sup> and says truly, “is banished from unmetred composition, any more than from that in metre.” So that he maintains Aristotle’s distinction of the emmetric and arrhythmic, while removing (as is in some languages undoubtedly right) the restriction to particular rhythms.

The Quintilian passage<sup>2</sup> is very much longer than Aristotle’s, and it has been contaminated by the infusion of a much later rhetorical abuse of terms. Because certain rhythms, considered merely in themselves, and for their mathematical-musical value, represent the *same* values, men had got into a fatal habit (which is doing harm to this day) of calling all three-time—double in this sense—“dactylic.” Quintilian, indeed, warns his readers most carefully that, *in verse*, an anapæst is a totally different thing from a dactyl. But this supposed abstract equivalence (not the inherited and consecrated licence as in verse) injures his words, for our use, to some extent. His drift, however, is all right, and that unfailing common-sense in which he is the equal of any writer, makes the following remarks of the highest value: that, though the *appearance* of an entire verse in prose is “the ugliest fault of all,” and even part of one risks inelegance, still “actual verses often escape us without our perceiving them”, that “though the whole body and course of prose is pervaded by number, and we cannot even speak except in longs and shorts, the materials of feet,” yet prose must, above all, be “varied in composition”, and

<sup>1</sup> In the *De Compositione*, § xviii

<sup>2</sup> *Inst. Orat.* IX. iv. 45-121.

that "no system will be good if it go always on the *same* feet"<sup>1</sup>

Differing from Aristotle and Cicero, but it would seem resting on Isocrates, he would in one place exclude four- and five-syllabled feet from prose scansion, and confine his list to ordinary double and triple measures of verse, though he excludes the molossus (— — —) Yet he lets the longer in again later, and in fact seems to have been in two minds on the subject, as well as on some others. The point of importance is that he, like Aristotle and Cicero, has no doubt of the possibility and propriety of applying longs and shorts, in their necessary varieties of combination, to the interpretation of prose rhythm. His insistence on Variety as the be-all and end-all of this rhythm rests on what we shall perhaps find to be the one "rock that abides" in our treacherous and quicksand-like matter. And we shall probably find also only too much reason to agree with him that "the management [either in creation or in criticism] of feet in prose is *more* difficult than in verse," though there may be better chance, for obvious reasons, of "windfalls of the Muses" and haphazard success.

These are, of course, not the only authorities that might be cited. As far as Latin is concerned some might consider Cicero more important even than Quintilian. A practising orator, who was also an untiring theoretical student of oratory, could not fail to devote special attention to a matter so intimately affecting his professional efforts, though it is no doubt well to remember that oratorical rhythm is by no means the only rhythm of prose, and that it may injuriously affect the reading aloud (and still more the reading to oneself) of non-oratorical matter. He is full of curious touches, though the curiosity often enforces the lesson hinted at above and to be repeated below.

In fact, I confess to having been gratified when a person of undoubted competence, to whom I had used

<sup>1</sup> A larger *cento* will be found in the present writer's *Loes Critica* (London and New York, 1903) pp 65, 66

the word *φλυαρία* in reference to some of the Tullian remarks on this subject, laughed and did not disagree. Cicero had got hold of Aristotle (whom he partly misquotes) and knew Isocrates, but his own remarks on the subject are, however well expressed, not much more "ingoining" than Mr Pope's on moral philosophy. There is something in the *Orator*, more in the *De Oratore*, and perhaps a few remarks elsewhere, but it all comes to very little. As good a thing as any, though not commonly quoted, is the observation,<sup>1</sup> of the general type which the author can conceive fairly well and express excellently, *est autem etiam in dicendo quidam cantus obscurior* ("there is in speaking a kind of underhum of song"). His best strictly technical criticism<sup>2</sup> seems to me to be that the dochmiac, which he confines to one only of its numerous forms (short, two longs, short, and long), *quovis loco aptus est*, though he will not have it repeated. And there is another good one, that by pause you can destroy the bad effect of a continuous iambic run. But what has been said above remains true, and the oratorical misus shows itself in his excessive attention to the *ends* of sentences, which are, of course, important, but hardly more so than other parts. His occasional obscurities and inconsistencies troubled the good Mason (see App II) not a little.

We must not, however, pass over in silence,<sup>3</sup> or with a mere mention, the treatment of the subject by the greatest of ancient, perhaps of all critics—the writer whom all the restless meddling and peddling of so-called scholarship still need not prevent any one who appreciates the laws of literary evidence from identifying (at least under caution) with Longinus of Athens and Palmyra. He had, though with a certain vacillation of language, mentioned rhythm, or at least "harmony" of construction, as one of his five "sources" of Sublimity, and at his thirty-ninth chapter he comes to it more specially.

<sup>1</sup> *Orator*, xvii 57 (ed Wilkins, Oxford, n d.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* lxiv 218.

<sup>3</sup> That *stupor mundi rhetorica*, Hermogenes, dealt with the subject, but not elaborately we will not dwell on him.



Unfortunately for us, however, he had, he tells us, published two books on the subject already, and therefore cuts it short here. Whether these dealt with rhythm and metre generally, or with prose rhythm specially, we cannot, of course, be sure or even guess. But it is clear that though in other parts of the treatise he includes and discusses poetry, he is here thinking of oratory in the first place, if not wholly. He opens with one of his most eloquent eulogies of "heavenly harmony" itself—its power of mastering the soul and compelling the very body to imitative movement—how it creates and reinforces all the changing forms of beauty in words and thoughts, and so forth. And then he illustrates with a sentence of Demosthenes, couched, as he says (it is, according to a warning just given, not perfectly easy to follow him), "wholly in the dactylic measure," but ending in a first pæon (he does not call it so), which gives a grandeur vanishing alike at the subtraction of a syllable and the addition of one.

But after a digression of more general character he turns from advocacy to warning. As nothing raises style more than grandeur and harmony of rhythm, so nothing degrades it so much as mincing or tripping effeminacy of movement—pyrrhics and trochees and double trochees suggesting regular dance-tune<sup>1</sup>. And he shows us how acute and well-trained the ears of a Greek must have been by saying that the audience of such a style sometimes actually beat time like dancers with the speaker—not apparently from any wish to ridicule him, but unable to resist the temptation and infection. There is, as has been admitted, not a little in this that is difficult, but the general drift of it is clear enough and thoroughly germane to our general subject. It was not impossibly the curious popularity of Longinus in the eighteenth century which put Mason and Hurd on the track of their rhythmical

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle had already stigmatised the poor trochee as "rather *cancan*-ish" —*κορδακικώτερος*. This certainly does not apply in English, where the trochee is the acorn drop (in fall and rebound) from our ancestral oaks, and the trickle of the water spring from the rock whence we were hewn.

analysis of prose, though Cicero is their more probable and oftener cited guide

It may be said, therefore, that these ancients set us in the right method, and if it is objected that our results will be totally different from theirs, it must be repeated that this objection, akin to one often made as to prosodic scansion, is the fruit of a disastrous misunderstanding. English feet will not produce the same effects, and permit of the same combinations, as Greek feet, because Greek is Greek and English is English. But they bear the same relation to English that Greek feet do to Greek, and they are equally useful and indispensable instruments in the analysis of rhythmical composition. The passage which I have taken as motto is golden. "We cannot even speak except in longs and shorts, and longs and shorts are the material of feet"

The history which is to follow should show amply the impossibility of *early* conscious application of any similar analysis to English, though it is hoped that it will also show something more. If even our prosodic writing is late, scanty, and for the most part frankly unsatisfactory at first, it could not be expected that this much more difficult and disputable enquiry should be entered upon early. Ben Jonson is almost the first person I can think of who is likely to have thought much about the matter, and it is noteworthy that his part-disciple Hobbes, when he wrote his own remarkable "brief" of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, simply omitted the portion concerning rhythm. Mason and Hurd, in the middle of the eighteenth century, are the first critics who, to my knowledge, treated prose rhythm seriously, and of the work of both account will be found in the proper place. Samuel Woodford<sup>1</sup> indeed, a man noticeable in many ways, had glanced at the connection between blank verse and prose, and Johnson, in some of his denunciations of "blanks," looks as if he ought to have had glimpses about the matter. But in fact, with occasional "sports" and exceptions, which should be duly chronicled later,

<sup>1</sup> See *History of Prose*, iii 552, note γ.

the subject has remained unhandled stuff and untrodden ground, or very nearly so, to the present day<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is, perhaps, barely desirable to observe that these few pages have not the least pretension to be an adequate account of the criticism of prose rhythm in antiquity. I should very much like to write *in extenso* on the subject, but such writing would be out of place here. The fullest, and in a way the standard book on the subject is, I believe, E Norden's *Die antike Kunstprosa* (Leipzig, 1898), which I have known since its appearance. But it was not until after this chapter was in print that I came across Mr A C Clark's invaluable collection of, I think, all the passages cited above, and certainly many others—*Fontes Prosae Numerosae* (Oxford, 1909). The English Preface is short and curiously unpretentious, but full of matter, and the collection itself is, as has been said, priceless. Much has recently been written on Cicero's rhythms—but for him *v. sup.* The present sketch is merely intended to indicate the origins of the procedure adopted in what follows, not the niceties of actual Greek and Latin arrangement. (After the greater part of this book was in type, and when the present chapter was already in revise for press, there appeared in the *Church Quarterly Review* for April 1912 an interesting article, by Mr John Shelly, based on Mr Clark's and some other books, and dealing with rhythm—Latin and English ecclesiastical. As I had already stated *infra* (p 133 *note*), I doubt whether Latin cadences are patient of exact adjustment to English. I also doubt the possibility of effectually introducing, with us, the so called *cursus*. But our literature on the subject is so scanty that I am glad to salute any new companion explorer, though I may add, as the book goes on, occasional indications in note of what I think insufficient in a Latin explanation.)

## CHAPTER II

### OLD ENGLISH PROSE RHYTHM

General characteristics of Old English prose—Its drawbacks and advantages in vocabulary and compounds—Its “synthetic” character—Intermixture of prosaic and poetic style—Latin influence—Passages for examination—Ethelbald’s grant to the Bishop of Worcester—The “Slaying of Cynewulf”—Remarks—Rhythmical effect of inflections—Of compounds, etc—*Un* endings, consonant groups, etc—General word-rhythm—Remarks on the rhythm of the composition—And its relations to verse—Absence of alliteration—Alfred’s translations—The tenth century—The *Blickling Homilies*—Interim summary of prose before Ælfric—Ælfric, the *Colloquy*—The *Homilies*—Specimen passages—Remarks on them—Later examples, Wulfstan—*Apollonius of Tyre*—General survey and summary

IT is well known that Anglo-Saxon, or Old English, prose stands in a rather peculiar relation to the corresponding verse<sup>1</sup> It is a sort of commonplace of literary history that verse is always older than prose, and in the case of most literatures—especially modern ones—it is

<sup>1</sup> Dr Lawrence’s remark (see Preface), which so impressed me, is as follows “The true rhythm of the old English verse is not a matter of mere antiquarian interest Until it is understood the development of English prose rhythm cannot be properly explained” (*Chapters on Alliterative Verse*, by John Lawrence, D Litt, London, 1893) It was this, as I have said, which set me on a new line of exploration, and I can never give it too much credit or thanks for the “send off” But my memory had, as I find on reading Dr Lawrence’s tractate again after a good many years (during which it had, after the wicked wont of pamphlets, “dived under”), deceived me as to there being, in the body of the work, any working out of this suggestion Such a working out was not, in fact, in the least necessitated by the title On the contrary, Dr Lawrence was not merely allowed but bound, to confine his attention, under that title, to what, no doubt, was the most important feature of Anglo Saxon verse alliteration, and was allowed, if not bound, to devote his chief attention to two varieties of that feature—“cross” and “vowel” alliteration Now these, though they certainly still furnish a

almost demonstrably so. Nor, perhaps, is there reason to doubt that the law did extend to Anglo-Saxon itself, and that the oldest forms of *Beowulf* and its companion pieces, not to speak of lost matter, might be older than any prose that existed, as they certainly were than any prose that we have. At the same time it would as certainly seem that prose of a fairly elaborate and accomplished character began with us at a period relatively much earlier than with other—and especially with Romance—nations. We get no Old French prose worth speaking of<sup>1</sup> till (and that rather doubtfully) the latter part of the twelfth century. We have Old English pretty certainly from the seventh, and quite certainly from the eighth.

The quality of this prose may no doubt have been exaggerated by the late Professor Eisle in his interesting and enthusiastic book<sup>2</sup> on the subject, nor will the present writer undertake to rank the tenth century with the seventeenth and the nineteenth as the three great ages of the vehicle in English. But undoubtedly the goodness of Old English prose is remarkable, and could hardly have escaped general observation had it not been that most people who have dealt with it have been either, as foreigners,<sup>3</sup> partially incapable of knowing good English prose from bad, or else natives intent upon points which have nothing to do with its goodness.

---

“riband in the cap” of English prose, can scarcely be said to dominate or prescribe its rhythm in any way. Alliteration is often almost entirely absent in some of the most exquisite of modern examples—for instance, in Mr Pater’s passage on Lionardo’s landscape, though it may be eminently present in others, as in De Quincey’s description of Our Lady of Sighs. Moreover, some of Dr Lawrence’s *dicta* are certainly not applicable to modern work, whatever they may be to ancient. But nothing can be further from my intention than to enter into any polemic with him. “I owe him a thousand pounds” for that sentence, and the rest hardly concerns me.

<sup>1</sup> Of course there must have been—we know, at least from assertion, that there *was* in the case of St. Mummolenus and others—*spoken* prose much earlier; but it has not come down, and prose does not seem to have been ever used for literary purposes before 1100, or for some time after that date.

<sup>2</sup> *English Prose* (London, 1890).

<sup>3</sup> A writer whom I greatly respect, but with whom I often disagree, once objected that “we are all foreigners as to Old English and Middle English.” I should retort “*Anglus sum, nihil Anglicanum*,” etc.

But the *distinguo* is all the more necessary here because it has been so seldom applied. I hardly know a single writer, except Mr W P Ker, who has dealt with Anglo-Saxon prose adequately,<sup>1</sup> and the space which he had for so dealing with it was itself inadequate for taking such aspects as the present. In order to judge it properly we must, in the first place, remember its limitations, which were so many and so great that, while they may justly reduce the positive critical estimate of its achievements, they ought to exalt that estimate relatively in almost a greater proportion.

The greatest of these drawbacks was not, perhaps, the limitation of the vocabulary, though undoubtedly this *was* a drawback. But it may be doubted whether the actual word-list, which is very far from inconsiderable, was insufficient for the tasks that it had to perform, and it possessed a power of compounding which, though English has not really lost it, modern precision has sadly hampered and hobbled. You may (Pecock, long after Anglo-Saxon days, showed it) go too far in the direction of substituting "star-witty man" for astrologer, and there really is no necessity to ostracise "penetration" in favour of "gothroughsomeness". But it is a great thing to be able to do these things when you like, and the languages which, like French, have surrendered, or mostly so, their franchise in this respect have paid no small penalty.

The real drawbacks of Anglo-Saxon lay elsewhere. In the first place, there was the large prevalence of the termination *m*, the ugliness of which Quintilian had admitted<sup>2</sup> and bewailed in Latin, centuries earlier. It has for some of us too much of the language of Mr Cophagus, "*um*—and so on". To some of us also, its yowels are apt to be drowned and muffled into a chorus of grunts by the consonants. But clear pronunciation can conquer this, as it (too rarely) does with well-bred, well-educated, and not phonetically given speakers of English to-day.

<sup>1</sup> In *The Dark Ages (Periods of European Literature)* (Edinburgh and London, 1904)

<sup>2</sup> *Inst. Orat.* xii x 33.

The most important characteristic of Old English,<sup>1</sup> however, from our present point of view—or the most<sup>t</sup> important next to its power of composition—was one, the exact operation of which, from that point of view, might seem rather doubtful. This was the fact that the language was what is (not too “inevitably”) called a “synthetic” one—that is to say, one furnished with pretty full declensions and conjugations of the principal parts of speech. The direct effect of this might at first sight seem likely to be favourable to variety and concinnity of rhythmical arrangement, inasmuch as, in such a language, the actual order of words in the clause is almost unlimited by any consideration of putting together in place those which are to go together in sense. It is doubtful, however, whether this is not counter-worked by some other and less obvious consequences of the synthetic condition. In such languages there is a tendency—universally observable, if not quite so positively “natural” as some have thought—to shift the verb to the end of the sentence, and this in its turn begets a monotony of sentence-rhythm. Moreover, the periodic sentence is much encouraged by the conveniences of such accident, and the periodic sentence is much more unlikely to attain the finest effect of symphonic arrangement than the cumulative.

Lastly, there is what should be the well-known fact: that the connection between Anglo-Saxon prose and Anglo-Saxon poetry is extraordinarily close. There was a time when students of this poetry had hardly recognised that it was verse at all. There was another, at the time of the production of the literature itself, when writers of prose made it, with alliteration and balanced accent, look as much like their own verse as possible. In fact, there is hardly a language in which prose-poetry claims such a definite division or department as in Old English: there is certainly none in which the instruments of the two harmonies are so nearly identical, and in which, consequently, the products slide and grade off into one another so easily and undistinguishably. There is no

metre in the poetry,<sup>1</sup> and there is a very fair amount of rhythm in the prose. Mechanically, the more regular recurrence of the centre break (which itself might be little noticed in some cases without the centre dot) is the only mark of division. In diction there is indeed something more—the peculiar metaphors and other unfamiliar turns of phrase appearing in the verse but not in the purer prose. Yet these very things do, as has been said, appear in the ornatèr specimens of that division.

It will be observed by all, and I have no doubt objected by many, that in these remarks I have taken no account of modern theories as to the *pronunciation* of Old English and its supposed differences from Middle and Modern. I do not know that such notice could in strictness be required of me, whatever my own ideas on the subject were.<sup>2</sup> For *relativity* of rhythm, generally if not universally, remains the same whatever the individual values may be, or is affected only by intonation, on which hardly even the maddest phonologist will dogmatise too confidently in the case of ancient languages. It may be that, as I believe they say, an oak was an “ark” (without the *r* roll) in Alfred’s time, and an “awk” (with acorns for eggs) in Chaucer’s. It may also have been an “aik,” as it was till lately in Scotland, or an “ike,” as it is in Germany, or an “ock,” as some of the place-names

<sup>1</sup> This statement has been called “startling”, but it will certainly not startle those who are acquainted in any way with the *History of English Prosody* to which this is a sequel, and I should not have thought that many others, even if they hold prosodic views different from mine, would object to it. “Metre” is used, of course, in the full classical sense in which Aristotle made his antithesis.

<sup>2</sup> I had at first put them somewhat more fully, but there is no room here for partially irrelevant polemics. I shall only say that—not, I think, from that “ignorance” which it is the rather facile wont of phoneticians and spelling reformers to impute to their adversaries, but after much study of the subject—I hold (a) that we have very slight and scrappy knowledge of our ancestors’ pronunciation at any time, (b) that even if an absolute standard of contemporary pronunciation could be reached, it is quite intolerable that any particular generation should deform or destroy the historical continuity of the written language, in order to inflict that pronunciation on its successors; (c) that *dead* languages can be best enjoyed as literature when they are pronounced by each nation as it pronounces its own living language.



they quote show, or an "ack," as perhaps some others do<sup>1</sup> But no one of these different values will really affect much, if at all, the *rhythm* of a sentence in which this polyonymous tree occurs

Of phonetics, then, no more now, or for ever, as far as this book is concerned

One other consideration of a general kind, and we may pass to the actual survey of the facts, and to such consideration of former views of them as may seem absolutely necessary It is quite certain that, however early we may place such specimens of Anglo-Saxon prose as we possess, these represent a period when Latin<sup>2</sup> culture of some kind was already open to, and in some degree had been enjoyed by, the writers Now it so happens that Lower Latin (the authors in which naturally exerted greater influence than the "Classics" proper) had developed a strongly rhetorical tinge which is noticeable even in writers like Symmachus, much more in Martianus Capella, Sidonius Apollinaris, and Venantius Fortunatus This tendency to "fireworks" seems to have been caught and exaggerated by the barbarian nations who came under Latin influence, and in some Anglo-Saxon writings, such as the *Blickling Homilies*, it is sometimes very distinctly perceptible, while rhetorical teaching in the technical sense was largely used and always included attention to rhythm. In fact, bombastic diction and artificial arrangement crept into the very charters themselves, where nothing could be less appropriate But enough of these generalities

It is proverbially difficult to begin, but the difficulty is multiplied, in a case like the present, by a consideration which has not always presented itself to writers on such

<sup>1</sup> The "ock" and "ack" may have, on the principle that Orm has made famous, short *vowel* values as against the long ones of the others But this will not much alter their *rhythmical* effect, which is the same in "Ockham" as in "Oakham"

<sup>2</sup> There appears to be also some reason for thinking that Greek was on the whole more known in the "Dark" Ages than in the "Middle", but this, though it should be kept in mind, is not sufficiently defined as a fact to enable us to take very positive estimates of the extent and nature of Greek influence.

subjects as clearly as it should have. A document such as the famous account of the murder of King Cynewulf, which will be commented on presently, may refer to an event certainly of the eighth century—no matter for the exact year. But if we only have it in a MS at oldest of the very end of the ninth, what confidence can we place in it as a monument of pure eighth-century prose? Still more, if this MS is the earliest trustworthy one of the *Chronicle*, can the brief but fairly composed entries of the fifth, sixth, seventh, claim such confidence? We might as well say that the short account of the birth of Christ and the visit of the Magi was written, in Anglo-Saxon as we have it, a few months later than the event when the news came to Britain. However, it may be admitted that this doubt applies less, or not at all, to documents of a definitely "diplomatic" kind such as the again famous grant of remission of London port-dues on two ships to the Bishop and Chapter of Worcester. The text and translation, as close as possible to words and order, may be given, following, in selection, Prof Earle<sup>1</sup> and others for text, but modern-Englishing, with the words picked and the order kept as near as possible to the original, for ourselves.

In usses dryhtnes noman  
 haelendes Cristes ic Aethelbald  
 Myrcna cincg waes beden from  
 þaem arfullan bisceope Milrede  
 þaett ic him alefde and his þaem  
 halegan hirede alle nedbade  
 tuegra sceopa þe þaerto lim-  
 pende beoð þett ic him forgefe  
 þa þaem eadigan Petre apostola  
 aldormen in þaem mynstre þeo-  
 wiað þaet is geseted in Hwicca  
 maegðe in þaere stowe þe mon  
 hateð Weogernacester    Ðaere

In our Lord's name, the  
 Saviour Christ, I Ethelbald of  
 Mercians king, was bidden  
 [prayed] by the pious bishop Mil-  
 rede that I to him leave [remits]  
 and to his holy herd [society]  
 all need-bids [forced charges], on  
 two ships thereto belonging that  
 are—that I forgive it to those  
 that the blessed Peter, alderman  
 of the apostles, in the minster  
 serve, that is seated in Hwicca  
 country, in the stow that men

<sup>1</sup> Who prints both. The charter may also be found in Thorpe's *Diplomatarium Anglo-Saxonicum* (London, 1865), pp. 28, 29, usefully preceded by other *Latin* documents of the same kind and tenor, which no doubt were patterns in *form*, but in no wise prescribe order or rhythm. The "Slaying of Cynewulf" occurs, of course, in any edition of the *Chronicle*, anno 755.

bene swyðe arfulle geðafunge ic  
 waes syllende for minre sawle  
 laecedome to ðon þætt for minum  
 synnum hi heo geeaðmedden  
 þætte heo waeren gelomlice þin-  
 geras wið drihten Swyðe lust-  
 fullice þa forgeofende ic him  
 alyfde alle nedbade tuegra sceopa  
 þa þe þær abaedde beoð from  
 þaem nedbaderum in Lunden-  
 tunes hyðe ond naefre ic ne  
 mine lastweardas ne ða nedbad-  
 eras geðristlaecen þat heo hit  
 onwenden oððe þon wiðgaen  
 Gif heo þat nyllen syn heo þonne  
 amansumade from daelneo  
 mencge liceman and blodes usses  
 drihtnes haelendes Cristes and  
 from alre neweste geleafulra syn  
 heo asceadene and asyndrade  
 nymðe heo hit her mid þingonge  
 bote gebete — *A Handbook to the  
 Land Charters, etc.*, by J Earle  
 (Clarendon Press, 1888), p 42

And þa ongeat se cyning þaet,  
 and he on þa duru eode, and þa  
 unheanlice hine werede, oþ he  
 on þone æþeling locude, and þa  
 utræsdæ on hine, and hine mic-  
 lum gewundode And hie alle  
 on þone cyning wærun feohtende  
 oþ þaet hie hine ofslægenne hæf-  
 don And þa on þaes wifes gebæ-  
 rum onfundon þæs cyniges þeg-  
 nas þa unstillnesse, and þa þider  
 urnon swa hwelc swa þonne gearo  
 wearþ and radost, and hiera se  
 æþeling gehwelcum feoh and  
 feorh gebead, and hiera nænig  
 hit geþicgean nolde ac hie  
 simle feohtende wæran oþ hie  
 alle lægon butan anum Bryttis-

hight Worcestre To this *bene*  
 ["prayer" as in Wordsworth] a  
 very gracious consent I was sell-  
 ing [*I gave*] for my soul's leech-  
 dom, to the end that for my  
 sins they might condescend that  
 they should be frequent *things*  
 ["persons who address a *thing*  
 or judicial assembly"]—"advoca-  
 cates" with the Lord Very lust-  
 fully [*gladly*], then forgiving I  
 have left [*remitted*] them all  
 need-bids [*imposts*] on two  
 ships, which there bidden be by  
 need-bidders ["collectors"] in  
 London town-hithe And never  
 I nor my last-comers [*successors*]  
 nor the need-bidders [*shall*] pre-  
 sume that they it undo or go  
 against it If they nill this, be  
 they therefore excommunicated  
 from *deal-numming* [*partaking*]  
 of the body and blood of our  
 Lord Saviour Christ, and from all  
 society of believers be they shed  
 [*severed*] and sundered, unless  
 they it here with *thinging boot*  
 [*penance made after application  
 for forgiveness to a lawful  
 authority*] make atonement

And then perceived the king  
 that, and he to the door yode,  
 and there in no paltry fashion  
 warded himself, till he on the  
 atheling looked, and then out-  
 rushed him and him mickle  
 wounded And they all on  
 the king were fighting till that  
 they him offslain had And  
 then on the woman's outcries,  
 on-found this king's thanes the  
 unstillness, and then thither ran,  
 just as yare was and readiest  
 And the atheling each of them  
 fee and life bid, and none of  
 them take it would, but they  
 always fighting were till they all  
 lay [dead], but one British

cum gisle, and se swiþe gewundad wæs Ða on morgenne gehierdun þæt þæs cyninges þegnas þe him be æftan wærun þæt se cyning ofslægen wæs, þa ridon hie þider, and his aldormon Osric, and Wiferþ his þegn, and þa men þe he be æftan him læfde ær, and þone æþeling on þære byrig metton þær se cyning ofslægen læg, and þa gatu him to belocen hæfdon and þa þær to eodon, and þa gebead he him hiera agenne dom feos and londas gif hie him þæs rices uþon, and him cyþdon þæt hiera mægas him mid wæron þa þe him from noldon,

and þa cuædon hie þæt him nænig mæg leofra nære þonne hiera hlaforð, and hie næfre his banan folgian noldon, and þa budon hie hiera mægum þæt hie gesunde from eodon, and hie cuædon þæt tæc ilce hiera geferum geboden wære, þe ær mid þam cyninge wærun, þa cuædon hie þæt hie hie þæs ne onmunden þon ma þe eowre geferan þe mid þam cyninge ofslægene wærun. And hie þa ymb þa gatu feohtende wæron oþþæt hie þær inne fulgon, and þone æþeling ofslogon, and þa men þe him mid wærun alle butan anum, se wæs þæs aldor monnes god sunu

hostage, and he much wounded was

When on the morning heard that the king's thanes who after [*left behind*] him were that the king offslain was, then rode they thither, and his alderman Osric, and Wiferth his thane, and the men whom he after him left ere while. And the atheling in the burg they met [*found*] where the king offslain lay, and the gates to them they locked had, and then they yode to them. And then bid he them their own doom [*terms*] fees and lands if they him the kingdom would grant and he let them couth that their kinsmen him with were, and that they him from nold [*would not*] go

Then said they [the thanes] that to them no kinsman was nearer than their lord, and they never his bane follow would. And then they bid their kinsmen that they sound from [*away*] yede should, and they said that that same to their feres had bidden been when they with the king were, they said that they this not admitted more than your feres that with the king offslain were. And they then about the gates fighting were until they therein made [*their way*], and the atheling offslaw and the men that him with were, all but one who was the alderman's god son

I have adopted this style of translation, though conscious that it will irritate some people sorely, because it would be impossible otherwise to indicate to that probably not inconsiderable proportion of readers who cannot or will not read Anglo-Saxon, something, and indeed a good deal, of the tactical<sup>1</sup> and rhythmical character of the

<sup>1</sup> I.e. not "*syntactical*" in the limited grammatical sense, but in matter of arrangement of words

language, and so to keep the balance true in respect of the illustrative extracts throughout the book<sup>1</sup>

Now, any one who studies these passages with a moderate degree of attention will not, I think, have much difficulty in agreeing, more or less, with the following remarks on the phenomena. The first and most obvious characteristic, as well as the most obvious point of difference from modern and even from Middle English, is that the presence of inflection determines the ordonnance of the clause. The verb gravitates to the end, the case has a tendency to come before the preposition, genitives and other dependents are often split by the word on which they depend.

One point of great and special as well as general importance is the predilection of the language for compounds, even to express a single or at least a simple idea, and the allied effect which particles and suffixes produce. Thus we no longer say to "*offslay*," and though we still say to "kill off" with a somewhat special meaning, we do not say to "offkill"<sup>2</sup>. We should still, if we used the same verb, say that the thanes "found out" that the king was dead, but we should not say that they "outfound" it, and we should say the king "rushed out," but not "out-rushed." Every one of these changes alters the rhythm. Such a word, again, as *unheanlic*, though almost alone in these particular extracts with "unstillness," represents

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, I hope it may also indicate to some how little difference or difficulty there really is in Anglo Saxon for a tolerably well educated and tolerably intelligent person—a description the like of which seems strangely to annoy some who perhaps do not recognise themselves in it. In the above long extracts I do not think there are a score of words which are absolutely obsolete, though there may be a few more of which the use has changed or which are archaic. The mere disguise of spelling should be impenetrable to no pretty fair wits. As to the language adopted it is necessarily somewhat of the "Wardour Street" order. "Yede" as an infinitive, has been specially objected to, but I am content to have my lot in Spenser's bosom hereafter (which indeed almost implies "Arthur's"). See *Shep Kal* July, 109, and *P Q I XI v i* "Bid" and "bidden," as in bidding at a sale, "make an offer."

<sup>2</sup> "Offset" has survived, though only in competition with "set off." "Offsaddle" has come back to us through kindred Dutch, and there are other compounds (chiefly dialectic) of the kind. But in most if not all of them it will be noted that the "off" has a more separate and additional sense than in "offslay."

an immense body of Anglo-Saxon words which are, by the prefix "un," altered in form and differently balanced in shape, and the omnipresent "ge" has the same effect. The result of all this is that we find Old English provided, in proportion, with fewer of the short monosyllables with which the more modern tongue has been reproached, when it does not avail itself of Romance synonyms. "Unstillness" for "noise" alters the rhythm remarkably.

Of actual syntax, except as far as the analytic-synthetic question comes in, it is not necessary to take much notice. I think it was odd of Professor Earle to say that "this syntax is not more rugged than that of Thucydides." The "ruggedness" of Thucydidean syntax surely consists in its constant subordination to the sense, which has accordingly to be found out by a not always easy process of interpretation before you can see what the syntax is. But the sense in *these* passages is as clear as anything can possibly be—a slight confusion of demonstrative pronouns (especially in the latter part of the "Slaying") being almost the only fault.

In one respect, which has been glanced at previously, both passages illustrate, though not very specially, the ugly *-um*-endings, which, let it be remembered, are not in any material degree beautified by pronouncing them *-oom*, for the grunt remains. The language may also to some ears—not, I confess, to mine—underlie the charge which has persisted against its descendants, that it is "overladen with consonants"<sup>1</sup>. Its rhythmical capacities are not small, it has already fallen into moulds which are still recognisable, and in some respects it already possesses instruments of harmony which, when language has ceased to be inflected and has shed most of its prefixes, will have to be supplied from alien sources. In particular, it is, by the operation of the causes above discussed, well furnished with those words of an amphibrachic character which Dante, though he did not call them amphibrachs, recognised as

<sup>1</sup> The charge, I think, rests altogether on a fallacy. If the predominance of consonants "clogs," the predominance of vowels gives, as sometimes in Italian, a monotonous flux which can be quite as teasing.

so important in the rhythm of his own language<sup>1</sup> And, again as in Italian, these and other words tend to convey a general trochaic rhythm, which, of course, is equally and more noticeable in the poetry of the time, but which has beyond all doubt persisted in English prose more fully than it has in English poetry

In ūssēs | dryhtnēs | nōmān | heālēndēs | Crīstēs<sup>2</sup> |

the very first note strikes it with a monosyllabic "catch" (or an amphibrach) at the beginning and one dactylic extension, as always with trochees, while if you start iambically the rhythm breaks down in ugly fashion So

þa cuæðon | hīe thæt him | nænig | mæg | leōfra | nære | thonne | hīera |  
hlāford, | and hīe | næfe | his banan | folgian | noldon |

follows the key, with amphibrachic and dactylic substitution, in the noblest and most exalted passage of all

We must, however, be careful, in considering, to distinguish the characteristics of individual word-rhythm from those of the completed clause or sentence It is true that, as we shall find by experience, foot-division otherwise than at the end of a word is much less frequent than it is in verse, so much so, that my friend the late Mr R L Stevenson had a notion<sup>3</sup> that you should not divide the word at all in spacing prose rhythm But this, *pace tanti*, is certainly wrong Foot-division at the end of a word is or should be as much the *rule* in prose as it is or should be the exception in verse But, on the other hand, the much greater compass and content of the prose foot—which may extend to five syllables at least—groups words in a fashion which to some extent merges, and to a very

<sup>1</sup> *Amore*, *diffusa*, etc

<sup>2</sup> This is perhaps the best place to explain the system of "quantification" adopted in reference to A It does not, of course, in the least pretend to follow *vowel* quantity nor (*v sup*) any presumed system of pronunciation, but is constructed on the principle which I believe to be essentially English at all periods, and to provide the very rhythmical differentia of the language

—that of granting the power of *length* sometimes to stress (as in "nōman"), sometimes to position, and sometimes to other causes still

<sup>3</sup> Developed in a letter to me on my arrangement of a text from the *Canticles* in the essay mentioned above (*v* Preface)

great extent affects, their individual value. A strong monosyllable following a trochee will make the end of the foot iambic, and so in more complicated cases, as will or should be endlessly illustrated below.

Now, when we look at the rhythm of the passages quoted, from the point of view of the larger integers, we shall find traces of the infancy of prose style in that the dominant word-rhythm echoes, with rare but not insufficient exceptions, the dominant clause-rhythm. Thus in the beginning of the grant it runs

In usses | dryhtnes | noman  
 haelendes | Cristes  
 ic Aedelbald | Myrcna | cincg  
 waes beden | from þaem | arfull in  
 bisceope | Milrede,

and so on, where it will be observed that if *cynng* had been put for *cincg* every line would have been trochaic or dactylic in ending. Trochaic or dactylic rhythm continues down to "Weogernacester"—in fact, through the whole piece. Except that there is only accidental alliteration the whole thing might be a block of Anglo-Saxon verse, neither very good nor very bad<sup>1</sup>.

This cannot quite be said of the other piece, though it looks exactly the kind of thing which would be "*unrhymed*" according to a process frequent in very early French prose<sup>2</sup> and exemplified in some of Malory's finest work. The strong prose genius of the language has got hold of this forerunner of Malory himself, and of many a prose tale-teller since. It is true that, by a curious accident, the opening words, modernised almost imperceptibly, and keeping a dissyllabic form for "*duru*," give a verse-rhythm familiar enough to us now in the history of the more fortunate fortunes of another King, Cole

And then | ongat | the cy|ning  
 And he | to the door|way yode

<sup>1</sup> If the similar Latin charters, above referred to, be examined, the rhythm will be found quite different, and necessitating quite different measurement.

<sup>2</sup> It is actually known to have occurred in some cases and is believed on good grounds to have given us Henri de Valenciennes' continuation of Villehardouin.



But this is not an *Anglo-Saxon* verse rhythm at all,<sup>1</sup> you do not get it till the Middle English blend has been chemically and indissolubly compounded. The trochaic under-hum is present, but the heat of the narration to some extent muffles it except at clause-ends, and even there the result is often truncated or catalectic, as indeed ancient critics had noticed in the case of their own languages. How it comes out at the climax has been noted already.

One other point, however, of remarkable interest and importance, should be discussed before we pass from these two texts. Alliteration, which plays so important a part in Anglo-Saxon verse, is here almost entirely absent. In the charter you would not expect much, but there is practically none—such things as “halegan hirede” or “syllende for minre sawle” being possibly accidental, and, at any rate, of no rhythmical pertinence. In the story of the king’s death it would be much more in place, and a later writer of the time and taste of Ælfric would not dream of omitting it. Here you may almost say that the writer, consciously or unconsciously, has gone out of his way to avoid it. Except “feoh” and “feorh,” an undoubtedly proverbial phrase or catch-word, which is not repeated as it might be lower down, there is hardly a single instance of even casual alliteration in the piece.

Very much the same characteristics, reinforced perhaps, to some extent by the constant presence or nearness, in translation, of Latin, appear in the work by, or attributed to, Alfred. But in the originally contributed pieces there is something more like alliteration and verse-rhythm generally, besides the trochaic dominant. Yet even here there is not really much. In the well-known narrative of Othere we come across things like “Norðmanna norðmest,” “stowum sticcemaelum,” “fyrrest farað,” “fisceran and fugeleran,” but they are by no means very numerous, and it is impossible to say that

<sup>1</sup> Attempts have been made to trace “nursery rhymes” to Anglo-Saxon rhythms of *verse*. But, if I know anything about any prosody, they are quite mistaken.

they constitute a distinct feature of the style. The companion report of Wulfstan has even fewer. In passages of pure translation the run of the Latin sentence is very commonly kept, and any alliteration that appears is more or less fortuitous. There may seem, for instance, to be some in this from the account of the death of Cyrus "hī up-forlet on feower hund ea and on syrtig ea, and syððan mid his fyrde þær-ofor for," but on reading it it will be seen that the repeated *f*'s are little noticed and affect the rhythm hardly at all. Still there is more alliteration, as in the story of Orpheus from the *Boethius*. It may be worth while here to give the Anglo-Saxon with translation as before, the original Latin, and Chaucer's version parallel, that they may be useful for reference later. Not much comment is needed here, except the (perhaps obvious) caution that Alfred's is not a translation but a very free paraphrase.

## ALFRED

*(Literally translated)*

Ða ongan monn secgan be  
þam hearpere, þæt he mihte  
hearpian þæt se wudu wagode,  
and þa stānas hī styredon for  
þam swege, and wild-deor þær  
woldan to-irnan and standan,  
swilce hī tame wæron, swa stille,  
þeah hī men oððe hundas wið  
eodon, þæt hī hī na ne onscune  
don. Ða sædon hī þæt ðæs  
hearperes wif sceolde acwelan,  
and hire sawle mon sceolde  
lædan to helle. Ða sceolde se  
hearpere weorþan swa sárig, þæt  
he ne mihte on gemong oðrum  
mannum bion, ac teah to wuda,  
and sæt on þam muntum, ægþer  
ge dæges ge nihtes, weop and  
hearpode, þæt þa wudas bifodon,  
and þa ea stodon, and nán heort  
ne onscunode næne leon, ne  
nán hara nænne hund, ne nán

Then began men to say of the  
harper, that he might harp [so]  
that the woods wagged and the  
stones stirred themselves for the  
sound, and the wild-deer there  
would to run and stand as they  
tame were, so still that though  
they with men or hounds yode,  
they did not onscunne<sup>1</sup> them.  
Then said they that this harper's  
wife should quail and her soul  
man should lead to hell. Then  
should the harper become so  
sorry that he not might in among  
other men be, and drew to  
woods and sat on the mountains,  
whether by day or night, and  
wept and harped, so that the  
woods trembled and the waters  
stood, and no hart onscunne<sup>1</sup>  
any lion, nor no hare any hound,  
nor no neat ne wist any hatred.

<sup>1</sup> I have chosen this northern form for "scunian" instead of "shun," because it keeps the rhythm better, and also preserves the sense of "loathing," in addition to that of mere "avoidance."

neat nyste nænne ándan ne nor any fear of others, for the  
 nænne ege to oðrum, for þære mirth of this sound <sup>1</sup>  
 mirhþe þæs sones

## CHAUCER

The poete of Trace (Orpheus),  
 that whilome hadde ryght greet  
 sorwe for the deth of his wyf,  
 aftur that he hadde makid by his  
 weeply songes the wodes moev-  
 able to renne, and hadde makid  
 the ryveris to stonden stille, and  
 hadde makid the hertes and the  
 hyndes to joynen dreedles here  
 sydes to cruel lyouns (for to  
 herkenen his song), and hadde  
 makid that the hare was nat  
 agast of the hound, whiche was  
 plesed by his song

## BOETHIUS

Quondam funera conjugis  
 Vates Threicius gemens,  
 Postquam flebilibus modis  
 Silvas currere, mobiles  
 Amnes stare coegerat,  
 Junxitque intrepidum latus  
 Saevis cerva leonibus,  
 Nec visum timuit lepus  
 Jam cantu placidum canem

When, however, we pass from the ninth century to the tenth, remarkable changes and developments are discovered. Unfortunately, the study of these is beset by all sorts of difficulties. The exact relation of date of MSS to date of composition seems often impossible to discover. For instance, we know that 971 is a "fixtured" of some sort in reference to the *Blackling Homilies*, but whether it is "date of writing" in one sense, or "date of writing" in another, we do not seem to know. Further, the editors of the texts (to whom we owe, of course, infinite thanks) have very rarely paid the least—or more than the least—attention to literary points. The Germans do not often touch at all on this side of the matter, and perhaps it is as well that they do not. Thorpe, J. M. Kemble (who surely would have had something to say), and other earlier scholars say little or nothing. Professor Skeat, as for instance in the final words on his completion of Ælfric's *Homilies*, seems to have designedly cut his remarks down to the lowest point. Professor Napier's long-promised edition of further texts in completion of

<sup>1</sup> This is a good opportunity for the reader to notice the constant substitution, in modern English, of an abrupt termination for a trochaically modulated one—in all the infinitives, in "woods" for "wudu," in "stones" for "stanas."

Morris, Thorpe, and Skeat has never appeared. One has therefore to do what one can unassisted.

The very first page of the Blickling collection<sup>1</sup> shows us that we have before us a writer or a group of writers (the authorship is, I believe, utterly unknown, and if I am any judge of style it was certainly not Ælfric in any case) who knows the rhetorical ropes, who has a definite bag of stylistic tricks to draw upon. There is not much alliteration, which of itself would almost exclude Ælfric. But there is a tendency, much stronger than in earlier writers, to antithetic balance in the sentence.

Maria cende ["kindled," as we still say of cats] þonne Drihten on blisse, Eua cende þurh firen [*sinful*] lust

Now this (of course most common) opposition of Mary and Eve is kept up, sometimes by actual use of the same words at the clause-ends, for several sentences. And it is most curious to mark how this antithetic arrangement, although the trochaic words *blisse*, *cende*, *Drihten*, etc. continue, sets up, as it always does, a general iambic drift, the *combative* tendency of the iamb manifesting itself. But we have not long to wait for the more flowery variety. The close of the Archangel's address to Our Lady, which Dr Morris partly quotes in his brief introduction, has almost all the accomplishment of the verse arrangement of the Authorised Version.

Wes þu hal, Maria, geofena ful, Drihten is mid þe, on þinre heortan & on þinum innoþe, & eac on þinum fultome. Ac blissa þu, fæmne, forðon þe Crist of heofona heanessum & of þam engelicum þrymnum on þinne innoþ astigeþ, and he hine to þon geeapmedeþ þæt he of his þæm fæderlican scéate þe him to meder

There is a flaw in the MS at the close of the sentence. But the probable whole may be Englished.

|                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Wassail to thee | } | Mary of graces full, the Lord is with thee in thy heart and in thy womb, and eke in thine assistance. But joy thyself, maiden, for that the Christ from heaven's highnesses, and from the glories of the angels, into thy womb shall descend, and he |
| Be thou hailed  |   |  |

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Morris, E E T S (London, 1880)

shall thus condescend him that from the bosom of his father  
[coming ?] he thee to mother [shall take ?]

And later

Seo readnes þære rósan lixeþ on þe, & seo hwitnes þære lilian  
scineþ on þe, & mid eallum missenlicum afeddum blostmum sý se  
Cristes brydbur gefiætword

The redness of the rose glitters in thee, and the whiteness of the  
lily shineth in thee, and with all mingling of flowers that blow be  
Christ's bride bower befrethworked

It is true that we have some evidence here of the  
earliness of our stage, for, as it happens, the preceding  
sentence has concluded with the same word *gefrætword*—  
a serious blemish, though the word is excellent in itself  
But one does not want a faultless precocity Very inter-  
esting too is the special passage which Dr Morris indicated  
as perhaps based on *Beowulf*, and as affording a key to a  
corrupt phrasing there It is (though he did not say so)  
also obviously connected with the famous *Vision of St  
Paul*—one of the oldest specimens of hagiology, and in a  
way a distinct precursor of Romance Here it is with a  
translation (mine, not his)

Swa Sanctus Paulus wæs  
geseonde on norðanweardne þisne  
middangeard, þar ealle wætere  
niðergewitað, & he þær geseah  
ofer ðæm wætere sumne harne  
stán, & wæron norð of ðæm  
stáne awexene swiðe hrimige  
bearwas,<sup>1</sup> & ðær wæron þystro-  
genip, & under þæm stáne wæs  
nicra eardung & wearga & he  
geseah þæt on ðæm clife hang  
odan on ðæm isgean bearwum  
manige swearte saula be heora  
handum gebundne, & þa fynd  
þara on nicra onlicnesse heora  
gripende wæron, swa swa grúdig  
wulf, & þæt wæter wæs swært  
under þæm clife neoðan & betuh  
þæm clife on ðæm wætre wæron

As S Paul was seeing towards  
the northward of the middle  
earth, where all waters pass  
away down, he there saw, over  
the waters, a hoary stone, and  
there were north of the stone  
waxen very rimy woods, and  
there were mists of darkness, and  
under the stone was the dwell-  
ing of nicors and cursed things  
And he saw that on the cliff there  
hanged on the icy woods many  
swart souls by their hands y-  
binded, and the fiends there  
in nicor's on-likeness on them  
gripping were just like a greedy  
wolf, and the water was swart  
under the cliff beneath And  
betwixt the cliff and the water

<sup>1</sup> In the *Beowulf* passage (2731) "*hrinde* bearwas," "*barky* [?] groves,"  
had been read.

|                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| swylce twelf mīla, & ðonne ða  | were some twelve miles, and   |
| twigo forburston þonne gewitan | when the twigs forburst then  |
| þa saula niðer þa þe on ðæm    | went the souls nether [wards] |
| twigum hangodan, & him on-     | that on the twigs hanged, and |
| fengon ða nicras               | them on caught the nicors     |

The single phrase "hrimige bearwas" (and perhaps the "nicors" who, though not in the actual context of *Beowulf*, are not far off) may be a reminiscence of the old epic, but it is clear that the whole passage was not composed under the influence of that or any other alliterative verse place as far as form goes. The imagery of poetical landscape of the gloomy kind is somewhat stock. But the thing has undergone a complete transformation. Even where there is alliteration, and more, cross-alliteration, as in the "swærte saula be heora handum" and "gūpende wæron swa swa grædig wulf," it is not poetically arranged. So in another passage on the birth of St John Baptist

& he ær to heofonum becom ærþon þe he eorþan æthrine, & þær Halgum Gaste onfeng ærþon þe he menniscne hufde, & þam godcundum gifum he æl onfeng, ærþon þe he mennisc lif hæfde, & he ongan lifgean ongean God, ærþon þe he him sylfum lifgean mihte, swa Sanctus Paulus se apostol cwæþ, "Ne lybbe ic, ac Crist leofaþ"

Now such echo of Anglo-Saxon verse rhythm as I at least have in my ears does not enable me to hear, despite the abundance of vowel-, the presence of consonant-alliteration and the usual trochaic run, any close approach to the general tune of that poetry.

But perhaps the most interesting part of this interesting book for our purpose is the "St Andrew," which of course directly suggests comparisons with the poem attributed to Cynewulf. The original legend (which must have been Greek-Eastern) is full of poetical inspiration, and thus maintains itself very fairly in the various forms—verse and prose, Anglo-Saxon and Middle English—which we have. The Homily, however, has no room for the poetical detail, but it might, as we found in other cases, have kept traces of poetical form. Here I can find none—the Blickling man may or may not have known *Andreas*, which was pretty certainly older by a good deal,

but no fraction stuck in his mind, whether the other one of *Beowulf* did or not. The torture-scene by dragging occurs in both, and if the circumstances are slightly different, the differences of the manner are not slight, but absolutely those of prose and verse. Let any one, with however little or however much knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, compare the passages, in the first case with, in the second without, the translations and see for himself

Hetow þa lædan  
ofer landsceare,  
þrægmaclum teon,

torngenīð lan,  
swa hie hit frecnost  
finden meahton,  
drogon deormode  
æfter dun scræfum

ymb stanhleoðo

wæs þres halgan lic  
sarbennum soden,  
swate bestemed,  
ban hus abrocen,  
blod yðum weoll  
hat of heolfre

Then might [bid] they lead him  
Over the land shares,  
Time meal [*at intervals*] to tow  
him

The angry enemies,  
As they it most frackly  
Find might  
They dragged him damagingly  
Through the down- [mountain]  
caves

Around the stone cliffs  
[*Also through roads and streets*]  
Was the saint's body  
With sore-wounds sodden,  
With blood besteam'd,  
The bone house broken,  
The blood in waves welled,  
Hot with gore

And þa eall þæt folc þæt  
gehierde, hit him licode, and  
hraðe hie sendon rāp on his  
sweoran, and hie hine tugon  
geond þære ceastre lanan. Mid  
þi þe se eadiga Andreas wæs  
togen his lichama wæs gemenged  
mid þære eorðan, swā þæt blod  
fleow ofer eorðan swā wæter

And when all the folk that  
heard, it liked them, and rathely  
they sent a rope on his swire  
[*neck*], and they him tugged  
around the cester's lanes. While  
that the holy Andrew was tugged,  
his body was mingled with the  
earth, so that his blood flowed  
over the earth like water

Thus, at this very early date, Anglo-Saxon was already provided with what Victor Hugo (showing at the same time his ignorance of English, by denying it to our language while asserting it for French) postulated, and rightly so, as the main differentia of a finished literary tongue—the existence of distinct styles for prose and verse. Thus did our English, in almost its earliest form,

anathematise, condemn, and antiquate by anticipation the Wordsworthian heresy as to the identity of the two. Moreover, which is our special business, the prose form in the *Chronicle*, in Alfred, and in the Blickling man or men is, though of no great elaborateness or periodic complexity, very far from rudimentary or childish. It is, in fact, much more symphonically accomplished, and less "thought out in pellets," than some latish Middle English prose at the end of the fourteenth century. It owed, no doubt, a good deal to Latin, of which so much in these very Homilies was to some extent a direct imitation or paraphrase, and the fact of this following, with the inferiority of the imitating language in demonstratives, etc., led to some confusion. But it was assisted by its inflections, and though, as already pointed out, the trochaic run continued, it has succeeded in forging for itself a fair prose cadence already.

There were some, however, who were not satisfied with this, and among them was perhaps the most accomplished writer of Anglo-Saxon prose at any time—certainly the Anglo-Saxon prose writer of widest learning and most ambitious tentative—Ælfric. So to him let us turn.

With regard to the well-known, interesting, and in fact positively amusing *Colloquy*<sup>1</sup>—a conversation between a monastic schoolmaster and the boys and servants of the community—there are two little difficulties in our way. One is the fact that it was certainly *auctum* (a word susceptible of very many meanings) by his pupil and namesake Ælfric Bata, the second is that there is some doubt whether the Anglo-Saxon version, which alone interests us, is original. But in one form of the title, Bata is made, in his own person, to say that his master composed it, and he only added *multas appendices*, while the whole point of the hand-book seems to necessitate a vernacular interpretation, whether written before-

<sup>1</sup> A "Hamiltonian" word-for-word doublet in Latin and Anglo-Saxon. Most conveniently found in Thorpe's *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica* (new edition, London, 1868), p. 18.



hand, or made at the time of teaching, and embodied afterwards. Nor would it, I think, be easy for any person, pretty widely practised in translation, to be positive which version was written first. The word-order is not more that of one language than that of the other, or, if there is any difference, it seems rather to incline to the vernacular.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, this vernacular itself is straightforward, but fairly polished, ordinary language with nothing of "talking-book" about it. If Ælfric wrote it his learning had in no way "sicklied" his English, nor had it infected him with any love of "inkhorn terms" for their own sake.

In his regular literary work, however, and especially in his famous and extensive *Homilies*,<sup>2</sup> something quite different meets us—something indeed which has not yet precisely united critical judgments as to its exact nature. His earliest editor naturally printed them as prose naturally, but we must remember that it was not at first that *any* Anglo-Saxon composition (from the fact of all being written straight on) was discovered to be verse. But later editors have printed large quantities as verse, though admitting that it is a kind of verse apparently of Ælfric's own invention. And some readers, not merely lazily taking the easy *via media*, have regarded none of it as exactly verse, but a great deal of it as elaborately rhymed prose, something like *Ossian* or Blake. Let us take some specimens.

THE CENTURION (Thorpe, i 126)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Þes hundredes ealdor genea-<br/>læhte ðam Hælende na healf<br/>unga, ac fulfremedlice He<br/>genealæhte mid micclum ge-<br/>leafan, and mid soðre eadmod-</p> | <p>The hundred's elder drew<br/>nigh to the Healer, not halfings<br/>but full-framedly He drew nigh<br/>with mickle belief, and with<br/>soothful humility and wisdom,</p> |
|--|--|

<sup>1</sup> Mr Cockayne (Preface to *Anglo-Saxon Leechdoms*) whom, as I mention elsewhere, I am specially bound to respect, and who knew infinitely more Anglo-Saxon than I do, thought the translation later and a mere "crib." But I speak as a critic, not as a linguist.

<sup>2</sup> Partly published by Thorpe (London, 1844) in the very desirable and beautifully printed issues of the Ælfric Society, which also contain Kemble's *Vercellæ MS*, *Solomon and Saturnus*, and other things. Completed by Skeat, E E T S (London, 1890 and 1900).

nyssse, and snotornysse, and soðre lufe Micelne geleafan he hæfde, þa þa he cwæð, "Drihten, cweð þin word, and min cniht bið hal" Soðlice he geswutelode micle eadmodnysse, mid þam ðe he cwæð, "Drihten, ne eom ic wyrðe þæt þu innfare under mine ðecene" He hæfde micle snotornysse, þa þa he understod þæt Crist is æghwær andweard þurh godcundnysse, se ðe lichamllice betwux mannum gesewenlic eode

and soothful love Much belief he had in that he quoth, "Lord! speak thy word, and my knight shall be whole" Soothly he manifested mickle humility in this, that he said, "Lord, not am I worthy that thou infare under my thatch" He hid mickle wisdom in that he understood that Christ is eachwhere present through his god kindness<sup>1</sup>—he who once bodily betwixt men seeably yode

#### DIVES AND LAZARUS (*ibid* 1 330)

Sume beladunge mihte se rica habban his uncyste, gif se reofia wædla ne læge ætforan his gesihðe eac wære ðam earman leohtre on mode, gif he ðæs rican mannes welan ne gesawe Mislice angsumnyssa he forbær, ðaða he næfde ne bigleofan, ne hælðe, ne hætera, and geseah ðone rican halne and deorweorðlice geglencgedne brucan his estmettas Genōh wære | þām wædlān | his untrummys, || þeah ðe | hē wiste | hæfde, || and eft him | wære genōh | his hafen-least, | ðeah ðe | hē gesundful | wære || Ac seō | menigfealde | earfoðnys | wæs his sawle | clænsung, || and ðæs rican | un-

Some letting oft might the rich man have for his uncostliness,<sup>2</sup> if the leprous beggar had not lain before his sight Else wold it to the poor man lighter in his mood if he the rich man's wealth had not seen Mingled angsonenesses he bare in that he had neither victuals, nor health, nor garments, and saw the rich man hale and dearworthily bedizened,<sup>3</sup> brook [*enjoy, make use of*] his feast meats Enough were to the beggar his untrimness, though he food had, and again to him were enough his havelessness though that he soundful were But the manifold hardship was his soul's cleansing, and the rich man's uncost and up-a-heavedness were his degradation, for that he saw the other's misery, and him with puffed up mind look down on But when

<sup>1</sup> Divine nature

<sup>2</sup> Stinginess, parsimony "Cyst" is of course "choice," not strictly "cost," but it is used in the sense of "generosity"

<sup>3</sup> I had wished to translate this "glancing," with the special sense of the German *glanzend* But I find the philologists disinclined to admit connection between this group and "glengan" Now it is wrong to hurt even a philologist's feelings, unless it is a matter of principle And "bedizened" comes nearer the rhythm

cýst and | up ahefednys | wæs  
 his | geniðerung || forðon | ðe he  
 geseah | ðæs oðres | yrmðe, ||  
 and hine | mid toðundenum |  
 mōde | forseah |<sup>1</sup> Ac ðaða he  
 wæs fram mannum forsewen, ða  
 genealæhton ða hundas, and his  
 wunda geliccedon \*Hundes lic  
 cung gehælf wunda

he was of men despised, then  
 drew nigh the hounds and his  
 wounds licked Hounds' licking  
 heals wounds

ST CUTHBERT (Thorpe, II 138)

Des foresæda halga wer wæs  
 gewunod þæt he wolde gán on  
 niht to sæ, and standan on ðam  
 sealtan brymme oð his swyran,  
 syngende his gebedu þa on  
 sumere nihte hlósnode sum oðer  
 munuc his færelde, and mid  
 sleáccre stalcunge his fótswaðum  
 fligde, oðþæt hí begen to sæ  
 becomon Ða dyde Cuðberhtus  
 swa his gewuna wæs, sang his  
 gebedu on sælicere yðe, standende  
 oð þone swyran, and syððan his  
 cneowa on ðam ceosle gebigde,  
 astiehtum handbredum to heofen-  
 licum iodore Efne ða comon  
 twegen seolas of sælicum grunde,  
 and hí mid heora flyse his fét  
 drygdon, and mid heora blæde  
 his leoma beðedon, and siððan  
 mid gebeacne his bletsunge  
 bædon, licgende æt his foton on  
 fealwum ceosle

The aforesaid holy man was  
 wonted that he would go at night  
 to the sea, and stand on the salt  
 brim up to his swire [*neck*] sing-  
 ing his beads Then on a certain  
 night waited another monk his  
 faring, and with slack stalking  
 his footswathes followed till that  
 they both to sea came Then  
 did Cuthbert as his wont was,  
 sang his beads in the sea-like  
 ooze, standing up to the swire,  
 and sithence his knees on the  
 chesil<sup>2</sup> bowed, with outstretched  
 handbreadths to the heavenly  
 firmament Lo<sup>1</sup> then came  
 tway seals from the sea-ground,  
 and they with their flux<sup>3</sup> his  
 feet dried, and with their breath  
 his limbs warmed, and sithence  
 with beckonings his blessingbade,  
 lying at his feet on the fallow  
 chesil

<sup>1</sup> On the principles of quantification adopted, *v. sup* p 21, note 2 They may cause horrification of friends and scorn of foes, but they are not so unreasonable as they look For instance, both *e*'s, of "hefed" may be technically short, but nothing shall persuade me that any English mouth ever got through "up ahefednys" without a stress Nor is there any other syllable for this than "hef" I have, however, in several places, given the alternative = to show knowledge of the orthodox vowel value

<sup>2</sup> "Shingle," as in the Chesil Beach at Portland

<sup>3</sup> Used by Dryden for a hare's fur

## ST THOMAS (Skeat, iv 408)

|                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Æfter þysum wordum he efste     | After these words he hastened to |
| to þam cwearterne               | the quarter [ <i>prison</i> ]    |
| And ge-sohte þone apostol sec   | And sought the Apostle, saying   |
| gende mid wope                  | with weeping                     |
| "Min broþor nyste leof þæt þu   | "My brother wist not, dear one,  |
| þæs lifigendan godes            | that thou of the living God      |
| Apostol wære and he hæfð        | Apostle were, and he hath highly |
| healice agylt"                  | sinned"                          |
| He un-band hine sona and bæd    | He unbound him soon, and         |
| þæt he under fenge              | begged that he would take        |
| Deorwurðe gyrlan þa cwæð        | Dearworth garments Then said     |
| drihtnes þegen                  | the Lord's thane                 |
| "Git þu nast þæt ne wenað       | "Yet thou wist not that not      |
| wuldorfulle gyrlan              | wear they glorious garments      |
| Ne fæschlice frætewunga þa þe   | Nor fleshly fretwork, those that |
| folgiað criste                  | follow Christ,                   |
| And gewilnað to hæbbenne þa     | And will them to have the        |
| heofonlican mihta               | heavenly might                   |
| Þes pallium þe ic werige wyle   | This pallium that I wear will    |
| me gelæstan                     | me last out—                     |
| And min syric ne tosihð ne mine | And my sark will not to spoil,   |
| sceos ne to bæristað            | nor my shoes to-buist,           |
| Ær þan þe min sawl siðað of     | Ere that my soul goeth from the  |
| þam lichaman"                   | body"                            |

Now these four pieces give, I believe, fair presentations, and as many as we can afford here, of Ælfric's various and most remarkable fashions of handling his native language in prose

The first is prose pure and simple. It is possible, of course—it is so in all prose of all languages,—to break up some of the clauses and sentences into something like Anglo-Saxon half-staves, but never continuously, and not often with any satisfactory sound. There is little or no alliteration, and what there is—such as "Hælende" and "healfunga"—is not of a rhythmical character at all. It is quite good prose, but the only rhetorical device about it is the inversion which was almost natural to the language, and which, by an interesting coincidence, we shall find revived in the prose of another great ecclesiastical writer, Bishop Fisher, at the beginning of a new stage of English, many centuries beyond Ælfric.

The second is much more ornate—in fact, it seems to

have been touched upon by a German critic as "semi-metrical" I should not call it so. There is still little alliteration, and that rarely of a rhythmical character. "Hundes liccung gehealð wunda" is something of an exception, but is probably a proverb. On the other hand, if it be compared with the Centuion passage, very much more attempt to achieve elaborate prose-rhythm is observable. The matter goes in long balanced clauses, not stave-like, but by no means dissimilar to the antithetic arrangement of much later English prose, and some particular care seems to be taken to choose words of similar cadence in particular places. To the passage which I have scanned we may return.

In the pretty and vivid picture of St Cuthbert and the seals and the peeping Tom of a monk (who, by the way, was punished for his peeping) there is much further change in the method. The alliteration is laid on with a butter-knife, if not with a trowel, and the clauses are susceptible of stave-division, though not very well. The pictorial-poetical nature of the subject excuses much, but perhaps a severe critic might say, "There is prose and there is poetry, you have outstepped one and not quite reached the other."

In the fourth example, on the other hand (where I have kept Professor Skeat's line-division, though I have made the translation, as in other cases, to suit myself), it seems to me that we have Ælfric at almost his formal best. He is less prodigal of alliteration, but what there is is well managed, and while he undoubtedly has something very like stave-division, it is stave-division of a peculiar kind, deliberately made to serve the ends of prose, and unquestionably fine. Blake might have had the passage before him.

But I am very much deceived if the sentence given above, which I have divided into its proper rhythmical clauses and have even ventured (at the risk of tuggings and torments like St Andrew's) to quantify, is not an example better deserving the title of "fine prose" than the whimsical passage from the probably later "Paternoster"

of *Solomon and Saturn*<sup>1</sup> which Professor Earle more whimsically selected for that designation

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>he is reðra and scearpra ðonne<br/>eal middangeard, ðeah he sy<br/>binnan his feower hwommum<br/>fulgedrifen wildeora, and anra<br/>gehwyrc deor hæbbe synderlice<br/>xii hornas irene, etc</p> | <p>He is fiercer and sharper than<br/>all the world, though it be within<br/>its four corners full driven of wild<br/>deer, and each several deer have<br/>severally twelve horns of iron,<br/>etc</p> |
|--|--|

That is fantastic, and, though not devoid of rhythm, it owes most of this to the simple multiplication of numerical fancies. Ours, though it has, of course, none of the flowery language for which these Homilies are rather famous, has a division and a variation of the *kola*<sup>2</sup> which are by no means rudimentary. And already we see the differentia of harmonious prose, in all languages perhaps, in English certainly, emerging—to wit, that while in verse the rhythmical effect of the larger integral values should be similar, in prose it should be as various as possible, yet so that it shall not jog or jar. The simpler trochaic run of the other passages quoted already combines itself here, it will be seen, into the three-, four-, and even five-footed sections of the most accomplished prose—amphibrachs, the bacchius and its opposite, pæons, and even dochmiacs perhaps, the balance—not “regular,” but extended to that antithetic parallelism which, with the ascent and descent that cannot quite come yet, is the great prose engine,—already emerges<sup>3</sup>. From my reading of Ælfric I could give many more passages equal to this, and perhaps some better, but not, I think, anything that stands out more remarkably or more naturally from a context good in itself, but, on the whole, of a lower level.

Whether, and if so, to what extent, these interesting and elaborate experiments of Ælfric were followed up by

<sup>1</sup> Earle, p. 382. The full passage in Kemble's *Solomon and Saturnus* (Ælfric Society, London, 1848), pp. 150, 151. “Hems” for “hwommum” is tempting, and I had once succumbed to it, but it is no doubt wrong. Kemble gives “pinnacles.”

<sup>2</sup> This Greek word for the “members” or divisions of a sentence seems to me better than the Latin “clause,” especially for rhythmical use.

<sup>3</sup> A friendly objection has been taken to this sentence as too difficult; but I hope better things of those readers who care to attend to the scanning given before, with its attendant note, that *sup* at p. 33, and the Table of Feet.

any of his numerous pupils or others, the unfortunately restricted body of Anglo-Saxon prose literature does not allow us to know. It is, on the whole, improbable, for, after the tenth century, the literary gift of the nation and language was obviously dwindling, and preparing itself for a transformation. Our later fragments or complete documents do not show much, if any, sign of it. The eccentric "Paternoster" description just referred to is little more than a *jeu d'esprit*—probably (from what we know of the Anglo-Saxon manner and of the source of the "Solomon and Marcolf" dialogues in which it occurs) Eastern or Lower Greek in origin. Nor, in going through these once more, can I find anything in the prose part (much is sheer if not very regular verse) that manifests peculiarity or individuality of style. The *Chronicle* continues now and then to furnish examples of good straightforward historical narration, but there is nothing new to be said about it. Neither can I discover much deserving special analysis in the sometimes highly praised work of Archbishop Wulfstan. It is very far from contemptible, and shows that the writer, who was doubtless a fair Latin scholar, followed his Latin masters without too much slavishness, but with a wise capacity for taking hints. However, Wulfstan has sometimes been so much lauded that perhaps a specimen should be given. Let us take one of those on which Professor Earle based the rather excessive statement that "of all the writers before the Conquest whose names are known to us, Wulfstan is the one whose diction has the most marked physiognomy."

Uton beon a urum hlaforde  
holde and getreowe and æfre  
eallum mihtum his wurðscipe  
ræran and his willan wyrcan,  
forðam eall, þet we æfre for  
riht hlafordhelde doð, eal we hit  
doð us sylfum to mycelre þearfe,

Let us be aye to our lord leal<sup>1</sup>  
and true, and ever with all our  
might his worship rear [*set up,*  
*maintain*] and his will work, for  
that all that we ever for right  
lord loyalty do, all we it do our-  
selves to mickle thrift,<sup>1</sup> inasmuch

<sup>1</sup> It is a pity that we have lost, while the Germans possess, *hold* and *georne*, nor is "thrift" etymologically = "pearfe", but the above renderings, "leal" and "gladly," are near enough in sense and pretty close in rhythm to the first mentioned words, while "profit" may replace "thrift" if desired.

forðam ðam bið witodlice God  
hold, þe bið his hlaforde rihtlice  
hold, and eac ah hlaforða ge-  
hwylc þæs for micle þearfe, þæt  
he his men rihtlice healde And  
we biddað and beodað, þæt Godes  
þeowas, þe for urne cynehlaford  
and for eal cristen folc þingian  
scylan and be godra manna æl-  
messan libbað, þæt hy þæs georne  
earnian, libban heora lif swa  
swa bec him wisian, and swa  
swa heora ealdras hym tæcan,  
and began heora þeowdom georne,  
þonne mægon hy ægþer ge hym  
sylfum wel fremian ge eallum  
cristenum folce

as is certainly God leal<sup>1</sup> to him  
that is rightly leal to his lord,  
and eke to any lord what  
soever it is for mickle thrift<sup>1</sup>  
that he his men rightly hold  
And we bid and bode that God's  
*theows* [*slaves, servant's*] who for  
our king-lord and for all Christian  
folk intercede shall, and by good  
men's alms live, that they this  
gladly<sup>1</sup> strive to live their life as  
their books wise [*gude*] them  
and as their elders them teach,  
and perform their *theowdom*  
[*service*] gladly Then may they  
eachwhither both to themselves  
well frame [*do*] and to all  
Christian people

This is good enough, but not, I think, very specially remarkable, and the Archbishop, as many descendants of his flock were to do later, has got into a very clumsily hinged and jointed sentence to open with As for pure rhythm, there is little but the trochaic and sometimes dactylic ending (which is ubiquitous) to notice

The one Anglo-Saxon production of the latest period before the Conquest which seems to me to display distinct idiosyncrasy, and a promise the performance of which was unfortunately to be postponed for more than three centuries by the necessity of remoulding the language, is the little story of *Apollonius of Tyre*<sup>2</sup>

We have, of course, nothing to do here with the very interesting literary associations of this story, but perhaps we may have a little to do with its immediate original Thorpe's statement<sup>3</sup> that it was translated from "a chapter of the *Gesta Romanorum*" was, of course, either an effect of ignorance or a slip of expression, for the *Gesta* certainly dates centuries after Anglo-Saxon ceased to be

<sup>1</sup> See preceding note

<sup>2</sup> The peculiar excellence of Anglo-Saxon narrative had been shown much earlier The "Slaying of Cynewulf" itself promises this, the translation, at Alfred's decree, of Pope Gregory's *Dialogues* by Bishop Wærferth of Worcester (ed Hecht, Leipzig, 1900) displays it in many places

<sup>3</sup> *Apollonius of Tyre* (London, 1834), p. 15



a literary or even a living language. It would rather seem not improbable (and this is quite in our division) that the original, at short second or even at first hand, was Greek. The clear, straightforward medium of the Greek Romances (excepting the Euphuist-Meredithian *ambages* of the much later *Hysminias and Hysmine*) comes nearer to the manner of our *Apollonius* than most "Dark Age" Latin.

At any rate, the terms just used are certainly deserved by what we have (it is but a portion) of the story. There is not the slightest tendency either to definite rhythmical alliteration or to the forging of long balanced sentences—though both these had, as we have seen, been freely used by Ælfric. It is narrative style as simple as Bunyan's and even simpler, with the conversation as naturally and unrhethorically adjusted as might be. Except once more in Sir John Mandeville, it is difficult to find an equally good vehicle for simple non-romantic story-telling before Bunyan himself, if not before Defoe and the eighteenth century. But then the narrative itself is of the simplest character—pure, though not extravagant, adventure (without mystical or chivalrous sublimation) and simple exchange of thought being the matter that has to be given. There had been a good deal of this straightforward narrative faculty displayed by the language in different places of Homily and translation. But the story, which, though prudishly or whimsically rejected by Chaucer, was to attract Gower and Shakespeare, is, in this form, the best piece of the kind that Old English has to show, and its author is almost the head of the race and lineage not merely of Bunyan and Defoe themselves, but of Fielding and Scott and Thackeray. Here is a piece of it, which surely needs no translation.

Mid þi ðe se cyning þas word gecwæð, ða færinga [*suddenly*] þar eode in ðæs cynges iunge dohtor, and cyste hyre fæder and ða ymbsittendan. Ða heo becom to Apollonio, þa gewænde heo ongean to hire fæder, and cwæð, Ðu góða cyningc, and min se leofesta fæder, hwæt is þes iunga man, þe ongean ðe on swa wurðlicum setle sit, mid sárlicum andwlitan? nāt ic hwæt he besorgað. Ða cwæð se cyningc, Leofe dohtor, þes iunga man is forliden [*shipwrecked*],

and he gecwemde [*pleased*] me manna betst on ðam plegan, forðam ic hine gelaðode to ðysum urum gebeorscipe Nát ic hwæt he is, ne hwanon he is, ac gif ðu wille witan hwæt he sy, axsa hine, forðam þe gedafenað [*it befits*] þæt þu wite Ða eode þæt mæden to Apollonio, and mid forwandigendre [*respectful*] spræce cwæð, Ðeah ðu stille sy and unrót [*sad*], þeah ic þine æðelborenesse od ðe geseo nu þonne, gif ðe to hefig ne þince, sege me þinne naman, and þin gelymp arece [*accident tell*] me Ða cwæð Apollonius, Gif ðu for neode axst æfter minum naman, ic secge þe, ic hine forleas on sæ Gif ðu wilt mine æðelborenesse witan, wite ðu þat ic hig forlet on Tharsum Ðæt mæden cwæð, Sege me gewislicor, þræt ic hit mæge understandan Apollonius þa soðlice hyre arehte ealle his gelymp, and æt þare spræcan ende him feollon tearas of ðam eagum

It seems unnecessary to take any minute notice of the latest fragments of pure Anglo-Saxon writing, such as the well-known passage from the *Chronicle* about the sufferings of the people in the castles of the robber barons during Stephen's reign There is nothing new to be found in them, and there was not likely to be It will be more profitable to take some general (if still *interim*) view of the rhythmical and "stylistic" character of the literature as a whole *a posteriori*, as a counterpart to the examination given above of the apparent characteristics of the language as capable of such expression *a priori*

A sane criticism will certainly not put either its capabilities or its performance very low, though such a criticism will hardly endorse the enthusiastic estimate of Mr Earle<sup>1</sup> For what may be called, without the least insulting intention, the childish things of prose—narration, simple instruction, or, in other words, conveyance of information in a straightforward, not slovenly, intelligible way,—Anglo-Saxon displays itself as excellently suited If the famous definition of style,<sup>2</sup> as being nothing else but the clear expression of the meaning, be accepted, the oldest form of our language may certainly be said to possess it in a very high degree

<sup>1</sup> If anybody should say, "Why do you quote Earle? He is quite obsolete as a scholar," my answer is ready "Please show me any scholar of the present day who has shown himself to be equally conversant, *from the literary point of view*, with Old, Middle, and Modern English" I know one, perhaps two, but neither has written *in extenso* on the matter

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge's, though not quite in his words

Neither, as we have seen, is it incapable of proceeding to a degree (in the other sense) still higher, and of expressing that meaning in a fashion *a cujusque natura fluens*—a style expressing the idiosyncrasy of the writer or speaker by ornament and suggestion of various kinds.

On the whole, however, these gifts are expended on too small a range of subjects, and the writers are too busy with the subject itself. Every now and then, as in the well-known description of the mandrake and the process of safely collecting it, with some others in the *Leechdoms*<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere, as well as in the works previously noted, one receives the suggestion that, if the range had been less limited and the temptation to original composition<sup>2</sup> larger, a much greater development might have taken place. Yet it may seem more probable that the stock-in-trade of the language was as yet too limited for prose of the first quality. And the phenomena which we have seen in Ælfric confirm this in a striking manner. Here is a literature which seems to some extent to contradict the general adage, "Verse first, prose afterwards." Yet after centuries of exercise in both, it seems to know hardly any other way of attaining elaborate prose than to fall back on the very forms and fashions of verse itself. Now this is an evil sign. There is nothing unhealthy in the process so long as the form of prose itself is kept. On the contrary, we have since seen three, if not four, periods in which prose has borrowed something from verse to its immense advantage: in the mid-seventeenth century, after the great Elizabethan period, in the later eighteenth century, after the work of Dryden and Pope, in the third decade of the nineteenth, after the first

<sup>1</sup> *Anglo Saxon Leechdoms*, etc (3 vols, "Rolls Series," London, 1864-66), a book which, if it were not full of interest in itself, I should cherish for the memory of its editor, Thomas Oswald Cockayne, one of the least pedantic and most original schoolmasters that any one ever had the luck to be taught by. The "Mandrake" is also in Thorpe's *Analecta*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> The extreme care with which interlined translations or glosses were made, and the effect they must have exercised, can be best seen from the *Liber Scintillarum*, possibly eighth century (EETS, 1889). They also extended (see Cockayne's Preface to *Leechdoms*) to Greek in separate words, if not in continuous passages.

Romantic group, in the seventh or eighth, after the work of those about Tennyson. But none of the great prose masters of these periods, neither Browne nor Taylor, neither Johnson nor Burke, neither Landor nor De Quincey, neither Mr Pater nor any one else, becomes a mere *transfuga* from prose to verse like Ælfric in his occasional and indeed frequent use of alliteration and stave-division. There is something apparently like it in Mr Ruskin's excessive addiction to blank-verse insets, but, as we shall see, I hope, in due time, the appearance is partly if not wholly deceptive. Such a falling back upon the tricks of verse, especially of a verse which was itself losing its stamina, and turning to rhyme and other formerly uncongenial things, is an almost unmistakable handwriting on the wall, prophetic of the passing of a kingdom.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FORMATION OF PROSE RHYTHM IN MIDDLE ENGLISH BEFORE C 1350

Importance and difficulty of Early and Middle English in our subject—The *Ancren Riwle*—Analysis of passages—"The Wooing of Our Lord"—Other twelfth and thirteenth century pieces—General remarks on early Middle English prose—Influence of the Vulgate, and of French prose

I HAVE endeavoured elsewhere<sup>1</sup> to make good the position that if any one would English prosody win, with Middle English he must needs begin. The truth (though a stage of preliminary enquiry, then almost unimportant, is now of great importance) remains still true in regard to prose, and it could not but be so, seeing that it is in this period that the English language proper is formed, and that, in consequence, we must look to it for the origin of all the formal characteristics of English literature. But the quest is here much more darkling, and the results scantier and more doubtful, than in the case of verse. In the first and main place, we have now returned to the usual law of literary order which Anglo-Saxon seems to violate, or at least to ignore. The new blend achieves itself slowly, and such achievement as there is, for the first two or three centuries, is mainly in verse. Moreover, while the great preponderance of ecclesiastical and theological literature in Anglo-Saxon had not been without effects, and those not wholly beneficial effects, on the development of prose, in the new

<sup>1</sup> In the *History of English Prosody*, and also in *A Historical Manual of English Prosody*

period, it is not a case of preponderance, it is one of monopoly. With the exception of the later parts of the *Chronicle*, which are almost pure Anglo-Saxon, and have been dealt with in so far as they need dealing, it may almost be said that there is not a single piece of prose of a profane kind in English from the Conquest to the birth of Chaucer—all but three hundred years. The great twelfth-century school of historians employs Latin solely, and hands on the vehicle. There are no prose vernacular scientific or miscellaneous treatises worth speaking of in early Middle English, there are no prose romances except Saints' Lives. In these, therefore, in Homilies, and in other divisions of the same kind of literature, we have to seek our only quarry. This is almost all translation,<sup>1</sup> and even among it there is but one piece of bulk and merit combined, the *Ancren Riwle*.

It is particularly important to remember that in the earlier part of this time there was no French prose to imitate, though it is barely possible that by the time of the *Riwle* there was, indeed, there are theories of a French original. French words, as we shall see, there are, and they are most important, while the author distinctly anticipates reading of English or French<sup>2</sup> on the part of his disciple-ladies. But even earlier there had been some strivings. Professor Earle, enthusiast as he was, could find nothing (he does not even mention the *Ancren Riwle*) to cite and comment on except the beautiful if rather morbid "Wooing of Our Lord," to which we shall come in due course. But it will be desirable here to select and comment a little more widely. The various treatises and homilies included in Dr Morris's *Old English Miscellany* and *Old English Homilies* may be scattered over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, according to

<sup>1</sup> There was, of course, *preaching* in English all along, we know, for instance, that the famous Abbot Samson of St Edmund's "preached to the people in English, but in the Norfolk dialect." This must have been years before the probable date of the *Ancren Riwle*, for Samson became abbot in 1182, and was then forty seven years old. He also "read English rolls," which seems not to have been a common accomplishment. But we do not know *what* he read.

<sup>2</sup> *Ancren Riwle* (ed. Morton, Camden Society, London, 1853), p. 44.

an order difficult to settle as to actual MSS, and impossible to correct according to their originals. I shall therefore take my examples avowedly pell-mell, though not without indicating any flashes of internal evidence as to prose accomplishment.

There used to be a theory—whether it has, like most such theories, been given up and revived again, and how often in each case, I do not know—that the author of the *Ancren Riwle* was also the author of the “Wooing of Our Lord,” of “Soul’s Ward,” of “Holy Maidenhead,” etc. The innocent, but rather monotonous, restlessness of philologists seems to have only two ways of exercising itself in this direction—to lump *anonyma* on a single head, or to distribute assigned work to other folk than the traditional assignees. In neither of these little games has it ever amused me to take a hand. I take the fords as I find them. But as the *Ancren Riwle*, whether the work of Bishop Richard Poore or of anybody else, whether originally Latin, French, or English, or first Latin, then French, then English, whether written by the author of the others or not—is the most important, the most varied, and the most interesting, it might undoubtedly be well to take it first. We have long been promised newer and newer-fangled editions of it, but as they have not arrived, we can stick to the old Camden Society one by Canon Morton, which, whatever its philological shortcomings, is amply sufficient to literature.

The monitor of the anchoresses writes with no rudeness, but with a great simplicity, and if, as has been also suggested, the passionate and florid “Wooing of Our Lord” is a paraphrase of any part of his work, it must either be by a different hand, or by the same hand in a most curiously different frame of mind and “habit of oration.” His speech is singularly straightforward, and the changes of vocabulary and syntax have brought his style much nearer to modern form than anything we have yet seen. The effect, especially of his few Romance words, is very striking. And sometimes, as we shall see, his prose-structure promises really mighty things to

come, when the actual word-store shall have been sufficiently varied and enriched

Eue heold ine Parais longe tale mid te neddre, & told hire al þe lescun þe God hire hefde iled, & Adam, of þen epple, & so the ueond<sup>1</sup> þurh hire word, understond anonriht hire wocnesse, and ıvond<sup>1</sup> wei touward hire of hire uorlorenesse Vre lefdı, Seinte Marie, dude al anoðer wise ne tolde heo þen engle none tale, ıuh askede him þıng scheortliche þe heo ne kude Ye, mine leoue sustren, uoleweð ure lefdı & nout þe kakelınde Eue

This ought to require no translation, but perhaps an exact modernising, on the lines of previous attempts, will bring out the very great advance that has been made in the direction of modernity itself

Eve held in Paradise long tale with the adder, and told her all the lesson that God her had learnt, and Adam, of the apple, and so the fiend, through her word, understood anonight her weakness, and found way toward her of her forlornness [*ruin*] Our Lady, St Mary, did all anotherwise, not told she the angel no tale, but asked him [the] thing shortly that she knew not Ye, my lief sisters, follow our Lady and not the cackling Eve

Here is a longer passage

Euerichon of þeos wordes wolde habben longe hwule uorte beon wel ıopened [*explained*], and gif ich hie swuðe [*very*] uorðward [*forthward, onward*], demeure ge þe lengre O [*one*] woid ich sigge [*say*] efter [*after = about*] ower su[ı]nnen þet hwonne se ge þenched of helle wo & of heoueriche wunne, vnderstondeð þet God wolde a sume wise scheawen ham to men ııisse worlde bi worldliche pınen & worldliche wunnen, and scheawede ham uorð ase þauh hit were a scheadewe—uor no likure ne beoð heo Ye beoð ouer pısse worldes see, uppen þe brugge of heouene Lokeð þet ge ne beon nout ıliche þe horse þet is scheouh, & blencheð uor one scheadewe upo þe heie brugge, & falleð adun into þe watere of þe heie brugge To scheowe heo beoð mid alle þet fleoð uor ane *peinture*, þet þuncheð ham grislich & grureful uorto biholden Wo and wunne ıpısse worlde al nis bute ase a scheadewe—al nis bute ase a *peinture*

Every one of these words would have long for to be well opened But if I hie very forthward, abide ye the longer Ont word I say about your sins that when ye bethink yourselves of Hell's woe and Heaven's win, understand that God would on some wise show them to men in this world by worldly pains and worldly wins And he

<sup>1</sup> Note "vıend" and "vıound," as they said in Tarrant Keynes that day, as they certainly did, not many years ago, in its neighbourhood, and as I hope they do still—in spite of board schools and other abominations.



showed them forth as if it were a shadow for no liker be they  
Ye be over this world's sea upon the bridge of Heaven Look that  
ye be not like the horse that is shy and blencheth at a shadow upon  
the high bridge and falleth adown into the water from the high  
bridge Too shy they be withal that flee for a painting, that  
thinketh them grisly and gruesome to behold Woe and win in  
this world, all is not but as a shadow, all is not but as a picture

Here a shorter

Schrift schal beon wreiful, bitter, mid seoruwe, ihol, naked, ofte  
imaked, hihful, edmod, scheomeful, dredful, & hopeful, wis, soð  
& willes, owune & studeuest, biðouht biuoren longe

*Followed by separate sections on each characteristic, as  
thus*

Schrift schal beon wreiful  
Schrift ouh forte beon soð, etc.<sup>1</sup>

And here the longest we can give

Ʒeonne beo ge dunes iheied up to Ʒe heouene, vor lo! hwu  
spekeð Ʒe lefdi iðet swete luue boc "Venit dilectus meus saliens  
in montibus, transiliens colles"<sup>2</sup> "Mī leof kumeð," he seið,  
"leapinde oðe dunes ouerleapinde hulles" Dunes bitocneð Ʒeo Ʒet  
ledeð hexst lif, hulles beoð Ʒe lowure Nu, seið heo Ʒet hire leof  
leapeð oðe hulles [*should be dunes*], Ʒet is, to-tret ham, & to-fuleð  
ham, & Ʒoleð Ʒet me to tret ham, & tukeð ham alto wundre,  
scheaweð in ham his owune treden Ʒet me trodde him in ham, &  
iunde hwu he was to-treden, ase his treoden scheaweð Ʒis  
beoð Ʒe heie dunes, ase Ʒe munt of Mungrie, & Ʒe dunes of  
Armenie Ʒeo hulles Ʒet beoð lowure, Ʒeo, ase Ʒe lefdi seið, hire  
sulf ouerleapeð, ne trusteð heo so wel on ham, uor hore feblesce,  
uor ne muhte heo nout iðolien swuche to tredunge, and Ʒereuore heo  
ouerleapeð ham, & forbereð ham, & forbuweð ham uort Ʒet heo beon  
iwxen herre, urom hulles to dunes His schedewe hure & hure  
ouergerð and wrið ham Ʒe hwule Ʒet he leapeð ouer ham, Ʒet is,  
sum ilcnesse he leið on ham of his lue on eorðe, ase Ʒauh hit were  
his schedewe Auh Ʒe dunes underuoð Ʒe treden of him suluen,  
and scheaweð in hore lue hwuch his lifode was—hwu & hwa! he  
eode—1 hwuche ulté—1 hwuche wo he ledde his lif on eorðe

<sup>1</sup> Most of this must be clear to any one *Wreiful* = "biwrayful,"  
"accusing", *hihful* = hie ful, "hurrying," "swift", *edmod* = humble  
*Willes* and *owune*, which may look as if they were tautological, or at least  
connected, are quite separate, *willes* is "voluntary" but *owune*, which  
Canon Morton hastily translated "voluntary," is explained in the text to  
mean "*personal*"—not gossip about other folk *Studeuest*, which may suggest  
"studious" to the unwary, is simply "stud vest" = "steadfast"

<sup>2</sup> A shortened form of *Cant Cant* 11 8 "Vox dilecti mei! ecce iste venit  
saliens in montibus, transiliens colles"

Then are ye mountains heightened up to Heaven, for lo' how speaketh the lady in that sweet love book, *Venit dulcitus meus saliens in montibus, transiliens colles* "My love cometh," she saith, "leaping on the downs, overleaping the hills" Downs betokeneth them that lead the highest life, hills are the lower. Now saith she that her love leaped on the downs, that is, to tread them [*the intensive* "to" as in "to-brake"] and to fileth them, and tholeth that men should to tread them, and tucketh them all to wonder, sheweth in them his own treadings that men trod in him, and they find how he was to trodden, as his treadings shew. These are the high downs as the Mount of Mungue<sup>1</sup> and the downs of Armenia. The hills that be lower, these, as the lady saith herself,<sup>2</sup> she overleapeth, and she trusteth not so well in them because of their feebleness. For they might not thole such to treading, and therefore she overleapeth them and forbeareth them, and forboweth [*avoideth*] them till that they be waxen higher, from hills to downs. His shadow, however, overgoeth and wrappeth them the while that he leapeth over them, that is a likeness he layeth on them of his life on earth as though it were his shadow. But the downs undergo the treading of himself, and shew in their life what his life was—how and where he yode, in what vileness, in what woe, he led his life on earth.

Now the first of these pieces is quite simple, the often-made contrast between Eve and Mary could not be put with less rhetorical flourish. But it might be put much worse. There is the sense of balance, knowledge of the value of mixed short and long sentences, and though the prose runs quite fluently there is no attempt at poetic rhythm. Nor does it very much matter whether this is due to a definite sense of the difference of the harmonies. But there is something else to notice here, and this is the absence of Romance words. Not one of the important vocables is other than pure English. The familiar note of "cackle" sounds throughout.

In the next passage the effect is strikingly different,

<sup>1</sup> Morton, "Montjoye" I had thought it might be "Montgibel" - Etna Ararat and Etna, the most famous and storied "downs" (smoke the Dorset man) of Ponent and Levant, would go well together. But Mr. Ker corrected this vain imagination, pointing out to me that it is simply "Mon-*Jours*" = the Great St Bernard, or the Alps generally. In fact, reading Layamon almost simultaneously, I came upon the two forms "Mungue" and "Montjoye" opposite each other in the two versions, and meaning "Alps". Hence, probably, Morton's rendering, elsewhere in Layamon II it is "Montagu".

<sup>2</sup> "Lefdi" has led the copyist astray. It is the Lord Christ *himself*.

and the causes are as strikingly evident. Whether the author had any particular model I must leave to Homiletic specialists to determine, my subject is the means whereby he effected—it may be imitation, it may be invention. The piece, I say, is eminently rhetorical, and Rhetoric uses her well-tried weapons. The figurative character of the whole is only indirectly of moment, but the amount of this indirect moment is great. For figures, as has been known of old, always bring with them—and indeed can hardly exist without—other devices. We have definite and not merely accidental alliteration, “hellish woe and heavenly win,” “worldly pains and worldly wins,” “showed as a shadow,” and perhaps “bridge” and “brink.” We have repetition and turn of words. We have already phrase in ranged clauses “all is not but as a shadow, all is not but as a picture.” And lastly we have Romance words.

One MS indeed seems to have “abode” instead of “demeure,” and it is curious that this latter has not abided in our language, which has adopted so many French synonyms. Neither has “peinture,” but of this there was not, so far as I know, any vernacular variant. “painting” or “picture” had not come in. Even if there were, it would be probable that it was rather an effort of a particular copyist to get a stumbling-block out of the way than an endeavour in several to unfamiliarise a familiar word. And the effect of these two or three French words, with their different sound and different accent, among the Teutonic, can escape no ear that is naturally given, or that has been trained, to the discrimination of literary resonance. There are not enough of them yet, and they keep their original form too much to be very powerful: there is more conflict than influence. But the influence is on the way, and before long it will arrive, bringing with it the alternation, if not the actual substitution, of “rising” for “falling” rhythm. For the tendency of French to throw such accent as it has to the last syllable inevitably provides iambic or anapæstic cadence instead of trochaic or dactylic.

The third passage, or rather bunch of beginnings, shows that this prose knew how to be emphatic. The selection of short sharp words, the alliteration, the avoiding of any "panning out," are all noteworthy. Some silly things have been said about the superiority of "Saxon" to "Latin" phrase, but it must be admitted (as one looks at Canon Morton's text and his translation on the two sides of the page-opening) that "Shrift ought to be sooth" is better than "Confession ought to be truthful," though the very contrast itself shows how language and literature will gain when the two horses draw together in the same car.

The last passage is perhaps the most interesting of all, because it attains the highest level of rhythm without any special device. As before, I must leave to some student of homiletics the question whether any particular treatise on the *Canticles* may yield the material of these remarks, as before also, the discovery of an original would not in any way affect our study except as it might assist it. I think that any one who reads the text with the assistance of the "construe"—which the modernising of the original language enables us to make extremely close—will see that a by no means ordinary brand of rhythmised prose, depending mainly on balance, but on that balance varied very considerably, is here attained. There is hardly a single word that is really obsolete,<sup>1</sup> though in one or two instances the change of form may hide the meaning from very careless or purblind eyes, and though inflections to some extent alter the "specific gravity" of individual words, they do not do so to a very important effect, because they balance *each other*. For instance, "treden" and "tredde" maintain the relation in "tread" and "trod," the weak syllable being eliminated on either side. There is very little Romance vocabulary, though "feblesce" (for "wocness") of course strikes one, and "vilté" still more. On the other hand, there is little

<sup>1</sup> "Tucian" = "chastise" is really such, though perhaps "teach" and "taught," as in the A V for "torment," may represent it. There are, indeed, some vernacular and dialectic uses of "tuck" itself, which seem not very distant. But they tell us that "tuck" is only "tug," or "touch."

alliteration, though "ledeth hexst lif hulles beoth the lowure" has a kind of cross-suggestion, and so have one or two other places<sup>1</sup> The accomplishment of the passage—and to my ear this is not inconsiderable—arises solely from the attainment of that undulating movement, balanced but varied, parallel but not stichic, which constitutes the rhythm of prose

If we compare with this the passionate passage which Mr Earle selected<sup>2</sup> from the "Wooring of Our Lord," and which some have thought to be a paraphrase of other things in the *Ancren Riwe* itself, the very great difference of the styles will emerge at once The matter of both is largely supplied by the *Canticles*, and the intention of both was to supply nuns or anchoresses with matter for meditation But the two writers, whoever they were, set about their work in the most different ways possible, whether the selection of words or the arrangement of them be considered We saw that the author of the *Ancren Riwe* selected his words soberly, by no means indulged in "spilth of adjectives," and rather eschewed obtrusive or profuse alliteration *This* writer lavishes adjectives and adverbs—"ahefulle deueles," "unimete miht," etc., and simply wallows in alliteration—"dradst with

<sup>1</sup> As "sum iſnesse he ƿeð on ham of his ƿue on eorðe"

<sup>2</sup> "A ihesu swete ihesu leue ƿat te luue of þe beo al mī likinge

"Bote moni man þurh his strengþe and hardſchipe ek makes him luued and ƿerned And is anī swa hardi swa artu? Nai for þu þe ane dreddes nawt wið þin anre dore bodi to fihte aȝaines alle þe ahefulle deueles of helle ƿat hwuch of ham swa is leſt laðeliche and grureful mihte he swuch as he is to monkin him ſcheawe al þe world were offeard him ane to bihalde for ne mihte na mon him ſeo and in his wit wunie bute ȝif þe grace and te strengþe of criſt balde he heorte

"Þu art ȝette her wið swa unimete miht ƿat wið þi deorewurðe hond nalet on rode þu band ta helle dogges and reftes ham hare prae ƿat tai hefden grediliche gripen and helden hit faſte for adames ſunne

"Þu kene kiddle kempē robbedes helle hus leſedes tīne priſuns and riddes ham ut of cwaln hus and leddes him wið þe ſelf to þi ȝimmede bur bold of eche bliſſe for þi of þe mī lefmon was ſoðliche quiddet Driht[n] is mahtī ſtrong and kene iſhte And for þi ȝif mē likes ſtalewurðe lefmon lūue iwile þe ihesu ſtrongest ouer alle ƿat þi maht felle mune ſtarke ſawle fan and te ſtrengþe of þe helpe mī muchele wacneſſe and hardſchipe of þe balde mīn herte

"A ihesu swete ihesu leue ƿat te luue of þe beo al mī likinge"—*English Prose*, pp 395 397, or Morris, First Series, pp 271 273

thy dear body," "greedily grips," "thū kene kidde kempe" On the other hand, he has little command of balance in any cunning or varied form, and throws his clauses together with either a complete disregard of gencial harmonic effect or a singularly bad ear for it. The undoubting if somewhat overstrained sentiment, and the echo of some beautiful but borrowed phrases, may give the piece a sort of glamour, but it is not really good prose in any division. For variety's sake I have not translated it, indeed nobody who is not merely scared by the displacing of a few letters can have any difficulty with most of it.

The short Homilies (accompanying the "Wooring") which Dr Morris gave in his collection,<sup>1</sup> and assigned partly at least to the twelfth century,<sup>2</sup> do not generally show any particular attempt at style or rhythm. In fact, as would be natural from the large amount of actual scriptural citation that they contain, they suggest oftenest versicular arrangement of the Vulgate. Some of them seem to be inspired by, if not directly modelled on, Ælfric, but though this attempt at archaism is interesting (a twelfth or thirteenth century "Wardour Street," as some scornful moderns would say), it does not come to much. Most of the "Wooring" itself is rapturous and almost hysterical ejaculation, making itself a style, if style it can be called, congenial to its mood.

On the contrary, the much more vigorous and masculine "Soul's Ward"<sup>3</sup> strikes into a style, also suitable, but approaching much nearer to that of the *Ancren Riwle*, with rather more alliteration. And this applies also to the striking piece, untitled, which Morris has christened as "An Bispel" (A Parable). Here the flowing narrative, which has been praised in the *Gregory* and the *Apollonius*, reappears, with additions of sententious comment sometimes of great merit, in the simpler oratorical style. It

<sup>1</sup> *Old English Homilies*, two vols., EETS (London, 1868 and 1873)

<sup>2</sup> Some of them, in their original forms, may be of the eleventh. None can be younger than the thirteenth.

<sup>3</sup> It appears to be a translation from a Latin piece, belonging to the great school of St. Victor.

is, on the whole, the most *sinewy* example of what they used (by no bad term) to call "semi-Saxon" composition. But it could only be well exhibited in an extract rather too long for us.

In this second stage, then (for there is not much good in dealing with the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*<sup>1</sup> and other purely dialectic examples), we see in some respects a falling-off—in others, or one other, a distinct if not very great advance. The falling-off is mainly connected with the great contraction of matter, with a strict limitation to one kind, and with the further limitation of models conditioned inevitably by the examples of precedent homiletic writing in the same language, and by the omnipresent influence of Latin work in similar kinds, and still more of the Vulgate. In reading that consummate production<sup>2</sup> with a view to such purposes as we have now before us, we must at once keep in view the continuous and the versicular structure and division. The paragraphs of the so-called Revised Version are, like most other things of that unfortunate enterprise, of very little use from the literary point of view, but while the versicles themselves generally justify themselves completely in any language to a good ear, it will, to such an ear, be clear that they frequently group themselves also into larger integers—sentences longer than the verse, or even groups of sentences. Of the paragraph, as such, it may be doubted whether any Anglo-Saxon or Middle English writer had much notion from the purely rhythmical-stylistic point of view. He had done with one subject and he took to another—that was all.

But as you turn over the Vulgate itself you see how many, and what different, models of style it offers to competent followers. Take the story of Naaman, *Reg* IV (V in AV), and you find a long narrative, capable of being divided up into various integers, but with no, or

<sup>1</sup> Which indeed hardly belongs here, having been probably written at the time of, or only just before, Chaucer's birth.

<sup>2</sup> Naturally, tenth to thirteenth century writers did not read the Clementine redaction, and perhaps not many of them read the *same* version exactly, but that did not matter.

few, rhetorical tricks of style. Take any of the so-called poetical books in the wide sense, *Job*, the *Psalms*, the *Proverbs*, *Isaiah*, and you find the famous parallelism, the short aphoristic statement divided in stave. Take such a passage as *Ecclesiasticus* xxv 18-21 and you find the rhetorical figure, epanaphora—*et omnem et non*—at the beginning and middle of four consecutive verses. Take, above all, as it is in another sense “above all” but the highest flights of the older “poetical” books, *Wisdom*, and you find the Greek sense of the paragraph fighting, as it were, with the Hebrew balanced versicle, and a most interesting Latin blend or mosaic resulting<sup>1</sup>. It is more interesting still, no doubt, in the whole Septuagint, but for much direct influence of that or of the Hebrew we shall have to wait till the sixteenth century. All these things influenced, of course, Anglo-Saxon homilists much, and their Middle English followers (in so far as they had a less accomplished though more accomplishable medium) still more. Their practice provided exercises which were to turn into really excellent work before very long, but the range of these exercises was as yet not sufficiently extensive, and the all-powerful consequence of the dose of French-accented words was too small and had not had time to work.

But there was another influence which must also be taken into consideration, though to take it “ciaves wary walking” and that is the influence of actual French prose itself. This prose, it is well known, was not early, it is questionable whether there was any worth speaking of fifty years before the *Ancren Riwle* was written. But St. Bernard may have written prose sermons (and such sermons must have been spoken long before) in the middle of the twelfth century, and Maurice de Sully pretty certainly wrote them in its later half. By the beginning of the thirteenth and not long after the *Riwle*, Geoffroi de Villehardouin had no difficulty in composing the admirable

<sup>1</sup> I am, of course, aware that Biblical critics speak of the diction of *Wisdom* as being “unfettered by Hebrew idioms.” But there is certainly Hebrew parallelism, and, I think, other Hebraic features.



true romance which goes by his name, and people were soon busy "unrhyming" recent verse work. The director of the anchoresses himself, as we have seen, thinks it equally probable that they may have read English or French books of devotion, and these must pretty surely have been in prose. The first of the great French prose Arthurian romances, even if not so old as they did seem to most critics not long ago, and still seem to some, were not to be long in coming. From the thirteenth century itself onward there were undoubtedly French models before English prose-writers, though even at the end of it—even at the beginning of the next—the unripeness of the language and its subjection to the general law of "verse first, prose afterwards" make Robert of Gloucester and Robert of Brunne choose the former rather than the latter as their implement in the task of recovering History for English. Manning's original had actually employed French verse in preference to English prose. Let us therefore see what French prose, in this its earliest stage, had to offer to the new pupil for which it was doing so much in verse, and which yet was showing so much independence in its discipleship. But for this purpose we had better start a new chapter, all the more so that almost our sole predecessor, Mr Earle, has relinquished Chaucer and Mandeville, if not Wyclif, to "the beneficial effect of French culture"—it is French culture that has "improved, the habit of the native prose"<sup>1</sup> *Voyons !*

<sup>1</sup> Some readers will no doubt say, "Where is Hampole?" My copies of Horstmann's *Hampoliana* would show a fair, and fairly long, acquaintance with him. But the difficulties of dates and personalities are great, and I doubt whether, *in prose*, anything attributable to him with any certainty would do us much good. The general remarks of this chapter apply,—though there are beautiful passages

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM CHAUCER TO MALORY

English made a school language—The four prosemen of the late fourteenth century—Wyclif—The Tracts and Sermons—The translation of the Bible—Trevisa—Sir John Mandeville—Chaucer—His various prose pieces—Their somewhat neglected importance—The *Parson's Tale*—The *Tale of Melibee*—Its blank verse—The *Astrolabe*—The *Boethius*—The fifteenth century—Its real importance—Pecock and the *Repressor*—His syntax—His compound equivalents—The *Paston Letters*—Malory—His prose and the earlier verse *Morte*—Guinevere's last meeting with Lancelot—The Lancelot dirge—The Throwing of Excalibur—His devices—His excellence a rather lonely one—Berners—Style of his romance translations—And contrast of their Prefaces—Fisher

THE historical circumstances which helped, if they did not wholly cause, the second stage of Middle English Literature, and thereby produced, in effect, the first stage of Modern, are, or ought to be, well known Merc political history—the severance of England and France as kingdoms, and the greater and greater Anglification<sup>1</sup> of the kings and nobles of England—had much to do with it. Social and educational changes had perhaps not a little. The famous passage<sup>2</sup> of John of Trevisa—himself

<sup>1</sup> It is doubted, seemingly on good grounds, whether Richard Cœur de Lion knew any English at all, and Jocelyn of Brakelonde in the passage noted above (p 44) seems to be rather more surprised that Abbot Samson could *read* English than that he could speak it. In fact, it would be not a little interesting to know what English books Samson did read and could have had to read.

<sup>2</sup> Whether part of this is repeated from others does not matter, but the text should be given, from Morris and Skeat's *Specimens*

“Þys manere was moche y vsed to fore þe furste moreyn, & ys seþthe somdel

one of the remarkable group of English prose-writers who adorn the latter part of the fourteenth century—explains these latter in all detail—the disuse, about the time of the Black Death, of the older practice of employing French as the medium of teaching and translation in schools, and the substitution for it of English, wherewith is associated, and should be handed down for honour to all ages, the name of John Cornwall, schoolmaster

That this might or must, in itself, stimulate writing in English for ordinary purposes may be self-evident, but some people may be not unreasonably inclined to ask whether it would not rather repress than stimulate that further blending of Romance and Teutonic vocabulary which has been repeatedly pointed out as being the indispensable preliminary to real accomplishment in the language. A little thought, however, will show that this is a mistake—that the wider range of subjects dealt with necessitated a wider vocabulary, and that English, freed from its inferior position, was sure to anglicise the numerous French words that it was forced to borrow

The quartette above referred to, and composed, besides Chaucer and Trevisa, of Wyclif and of the *persona* (if not personality) of "Sir John Mandeville," were all, for literary purposes, so nearly contemporary that it does not matter which is taken first as far as chronology goes. In point of subject and perhaps of date, though not of literary

ychaunged For Iohan Cornwall, a mayster of gramere, chayngede þe lore in gramer scole, & construccoon of Freynsch in to Englysch, & Richard Pencrych lurnede þat manere techyng of hym, & oþer men of Pencrych, so þat now, þe þer of oure Lord a þousond þre hondred foure score & fyue, of þe secunde kyng Richard after þe conquest nyne, in al þe gramer scoles of Engelond childern leueþ Frensch & construeþ & lurneþ an Englysch, and habbeþ þer by avautage in on syde & desavauntage yn anoþer, here avautage ys, þat a lurneþ here gramer yn lasse tyme þan childern wer ywoned to do—disavauntage ys, þat now childern of gramer scole conneþ no more Frensch þan can here lift heele, & þat ys harm for ham, & a scholle passe þe se & trauayle in strange londes, & in meny caas also. Also gentil men habbeþ now moche yleft for to teche here childern Frensch. Hyt semeþ a gret wondur hou3 Englysch, þat ys þe burþ tonge of Englysch men & here oune longage & tonge, ys so dyuers of souþ in þis ylond, & þe longage of Normandy ys comlyng of a noþer lond & hap on maner soun among al men þat spekeþ hyt ary3t in Engelond. Noþeles þer ys as meny dyuers maner Frensch yn þe rem of Fraunce as ys dyuers manere Englysch in þe rem of Engelond."

importance, Wyclif may have precedence. He deserves, however, the less notice, because he did not write his purely philosophical works in English, and because the works which he did write in English were mainly of the same class as those which we considered in the last chapter, though a little more popularly scholastic in style. To call him "the first writer of English prose" is merely an unconscious aposiopesis, and an equally unconscious confession of ignorance. If there be added to it, "of whom the writer or speaker ever heard," it might, no doubt, be admitted *pro tanto*. The tracts<sup>1</sup> attributed to, and certainly in some cases written by, Wyclif show, as one *might* expect, a certain advance in facility of handling, and, as one *would* expect, a certain greater advance still in vivacity, though also to monotony. I do not know whether any German or English "enumerator" has ever counted the number of times the word "cursed" occurs in Wyclif's tracts. And the abundance, enthusiasm, and popularity of Wyclif's wandering preachers must have done something for our speech. But "father of English prose" is, as applied to him, one of the silliest of these usually silly expressions, and is perhaps most frequent in the mouths of those who also consider him—and perhaps really mean by it—"father of English Protestantism." However, from a person with such a reputation, if not such a record, some specimen should doubtless be given, especially as he might, without any absurdity, be called father of English *philosophical* prose, even with the caution above. Here is a passage of an argumentative kind.<sup>2</sup>

Nisi granum frumenti — JOHN XII 24

In this short Gospel be doubts, both of conscience and of other. First philosophers doubt, whether (the) seed loseeth his form when it is made a new thing, as the Gospel speaketh here, and some men think nay, for sith the same quantity or quality or virtue

<sup>1</sup> *Select English Works of Wyclif*, 3 vols (1869-1871), ed T Arnold. *Wyclif's English Works* [not included in the above], ed Matthew (E E T S)

<sup>2</sup> From this point onwards, with a few exceptions, the extracts are modernised in spelling, on the principle adopted in Sir H Craik's *Selections* (v Preface)

that was first in seed, liveth after in the fruit, as a child is often like to his father or to his mother, or else to his eld father, after that the virtue lasteth,—and sith all these be accidents, that may not dwell without subject,—it seemeth that the same body is first seed and after fruit, and thus it may oft change from seed to fruit and again. Here many cleped philosophers glaver [*claver, chatter*] diversely, but in this matter God's law speaketh thus, as did eld clerks, that the substance of a body is before that it be seed, and now fruit and now seed, and now quick and now dead. And thus many forms must be together in one thing, and specially when the parts of that thing be meddled together, and thus the substance of a body is now of one kind and now of another. And so both these accidents, quality and quantity, must dwell in the same substance, all if it be changed in kinds, and thus this same thing that is now a wheat corn shall be dead and turn to grass, and after to many corns. But variance in words in this matter falleth to clerks, and showing of equivocation, the which is more ready in Latin, but it is enough to us to put, that the same substance is now quick and now dead, and now seed and now fruit, and so that substance that is now a wheat corn must needs die before that it is made grass, and sith be made an whole ear. And thus speaketh holy writ and no man can disprove it. Error of freres in this matter is not here to rehearse, for it is enough to tell how they err in belief.

This, of course, is very far from contemptible, indeed, it is distinctly good. Still, we can as distinctly perceive the man thinking in Latin and translating as closely as he can. Even the English order he does not always keep, as in the last sentence, "Error of freres," etc. "The which is more ready in Latin" is a phrase of further reach than its author intended.

If any one wishes to appreciate further the value of the translations of the Bible by Wyclif and his followers<sup>1</sup> as regards English prose style and rhythm, the process is facilitated for him by Bosworth's parallel edition of the Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, and Wyclifian Gospels, with Tyndale's to fill the fourth place. The enormous advance made by the latter must be, in fairness, postponed till we come to its luckless author, and with Ulphilas we

<sup>1</sup> The distribution of the work between Wyclif, Hereford, Purvey, etc., would, in any case, hardly concern us much, but as the gospels are almost *non con* attributed to the Master himself, it becomes practically irrelevant. But Purvey did certainly improve on that master's rhythm. The great edition of Forshall and Madden must, of course, be consulted by any one who wants to investigate the subject, but there are excellent specimens in Morris and Skeat, the latter of whom has also reprinted *Job* and the *Psalms* (Clarendon Press).

have nothing to do But I have inserted the Vulgate, from which, beyond all question, the Wyclifian version is a remarkably uninspired (or *de*-inspired) but direct and pretty slavish version, distinctly inferior to the Anglo-Saxon This is how the three give the Parable of the Sower, St Luke viii 5-8

*Anglo Saxon* — Sum man his sēd seow Ðā he ðet seow, sum feoll wið ðone weg, and wearþ foitreden, and heofones fugulas hit frtæon

And sum feoll ofer ðæne stán, and hit forscranc, forðam ðe hit wætan næfde

And sum feoll on ða þornas, and ða þornas hyt forþrysmodon

And sum feoll on gode eorþan, and worhte hundfealdne wastm Ðá clypode he and cwæþ, Gehýre, se ðe earan hæbbe

*Vulgate* — *Erant qui seminant, seminare semen suum, et dum seminant, aliud cecidit secus viam, et conculcatum est, et volucres coeli comederunt illud*

Et aliud cecidit supra petram, et natum aruit quia non habebat humorem

Et aliud cecidit inter spinas, et simul exortae spinæ suffocaverunt illud

Et aliud cecidit in terram bonam, et ortum fecit fructum centuplum Haec dicens clamabat, "Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat"

*Wyclif* — He that sowith, ȝede out for to sowe his seed And the while he sowith, sum felde by sydis the weye, and was defouled, and briddis of the eyr eeten it

And anothei felde down on a stoon, and it sprungen vp dryede, for it hadde not moisture

And anothei felde down among thornes, and the thornes sprungen vp to gidere strangliden it

And another felde down in to good erthe, and it sprungen vp made an hundrid foold fruit He seyinge thes thingis criede, He that hath eeris of heeringe, heere he

This last is "the *vernacular*" with a vengeance—a mere slavish rendering, of word for word and construction for construction, out of the Latin The man does not see the awkwardness, in the English context, of "he that soweth," and it never enters into his head that if you *must* keep this Latin, "There has gone out he who soweth" will be the thing So also he does not dare to get out of the tense of *seminat*, as the Anglo-Saxon translator had done, and as Tyndale and his followers

did later "Defoulid" is interesting as a word, because it exhibits the confusion between the English "foul" (to "dirty") and the French "fouler" (to "tread under foot"), but for that reason it lacks the vividness of "fortreden" and "conculcatum" and our later English, and gives a weaker idea. The intrusive and suspended participles, "sprungen up," are ugly Latin aliens, but Wyclif or his man had not the sense to avoid them as his Old English predecessor and his Tudor follower had. The whole thing misses fire, and the only part that has a satisfactory rhythm is the first verse, which itself is not superexcellent. A much better example is to be found in the *Sermons* paraphrase of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. But those who care to do so should compare it with the actual (and far inferior) translation, to be found most easily in Bagster's *English Hexapla* (London, 1841), or in Bosworth and Waring's four-version *Gospels*, 3rd edition (London, 1888).

Luke saith that Christ told how a man had two sons, and the younger of them said unto his father, Father, give me a portion of the substance that falleth me. And the father departed him his goods. And soon after this young son gathered all that fell to him, and went forth in pilgrimage into a far country, and there he wasted his goods, living in lechery. And after that he had ended all his goods, there fell a great hunger in that land, and he began to be needy. And he went out and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country, and this citizen sent him into his town to keep swine. And this son coveted to fill his belly with these holes ["hulls," "husks"] that the hogs eat, and no man gave him. And he, turning again, said, How many hinds in my father's house be full of loaves, and I perish here for hunger. I shall rise, and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned in Heaven and before thee, now I am not worthy to be cleped thy son, make me as one of thy hinds. And he rose and came to his father. And yet when he was far, his father saw him, and was moved by mercy, and running against his son, fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned in Heaven and before thee, now I am not worthy to be cleped thy son. And the father said to his servants anon, Bring ye forth the first stole, and clothe ye him, and give ye a ring in his hand, and shoon upon his feet. And bring ye a fat calf, and slay him, and eat we, and feed us, for this son of mine was dead, and is quickened again, and he was perished, and is found. And they began to feed him. And his elder son was in the field, and when he came

and was nigh the house, he heard a symphony and other noise of minstrelsy. And this elder son cleped one of the servants, and asked what were these things. And he said to him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath slain a fat calf, for he hath received him safe. But this elder son had disdain and would not come in, therefore, his father went out, and began to pray him. And he answered, and said to his father, Lo, so many years I serve to thee, I passed never thy mandement, and thou gavest me never a kid, for to feed me with my friends. But after that he, this thy son hath murdered his goods with hoors is come, thou hast killed to him a fat calf. And the father said to him, Son, thou art ever more with me, and all my goods be thine. But it was need to eat and to make merry, for he this thy brother was dead, and liveth again, he was perished, and is found.

This is, of course, excellent, but its excellence is due to the fact that the writer has not merely kept as close as possible to the Vulgate order, but has also availed himself of the old English style of narrative plainness so often noted.

Trevisa is not much more of a definite "man of letters" than Wyclif, perhaps not so much, but he is of greater importance in the history of prose style, and so (to a lesser degree) in that of prose rhythm, because of his important rehabilitation of English as a vehicle of prose history. When Robert Manning, at the beginning of the century, followed his namesake of Gloucester in restoring the language as a medium of historical communication, he also confined himself to verse, when Trevisa towards the end translates Higden, he ventures prose. Nor is his matter of the bare chronicle kind. He finds or makes occasion for discussion of the products of the country, of its dialects, of such things as the educational changes referred to above, and all this not only enables but obliges him to use a considerable number of new words. These words he arranges in good, straightforward fashion, but without any special character in its ordonnance or rhythm. Yet history will in time, and no long time, take care to make these things also her own.<sup>1</sup>

But when we turn from Wyclif and Trevisa to Chaucer

<sup>1</sup> It does not seem necessary to give a second example after that provided earlier (*v. sup.* pp. 56, 57).



and Mandeville, then, once more, in the ever happy words of that beloved physician and good Jacobite John Byrom, "God bless us all! it's quite another thing!" We shall finish with Chaucer, because, though his prose work may not be attractive to the general, it is curiously various in character and subject, and has, as it seems to the present writer, been strangely undervalued as prose. Nobody whose opinion is good for anything has ever undervalued Mandeville as a writer. But, even as a writer, the attention which has been paid to him has too often been diverted unduly to his matter, and to questions connected with it which have for us absolutely no importance whatever. The sources of the compilation (as it pretty clearly is) concern us not in the very least. The identity of the compiler concerns us, if it were possible, less. That it was originally written in French or Latin (probably French), and that our "Mandeville," though purporting to come from an English writer, is a mere translation, matters, if at all, as a *minus*-quantity in formidable inferiority to zero. Even if there had been a real English Sir John, and if he wrote (as apparently somebody did) before or about the middle of the fourteenth century, he would have almost certainly written in French or Latin, and all our English prose of the later part is more or less translation. Nor further, while giving all possible thanks to Mr Nicholson and to Colonel Yule, to Mr Warner and Mr Pollard, need we trouble ourselves with "C" and "E" and the probably older version which used to be printed in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. The point for us is the way in which the English translator or translators, whoever he was or whoever they were, "put on helmets of gold, to follow Sir John," as the Danish ballad says.

There are not many more readable books for subject and manner combined, but the secrets of the manner are neither numerous nor complicated. Except in the most indirect fashion, there is no need to go to "French culture" to explain the English Mandeville's method, even if the book which we call by his name is itself a straight

translation from a French original I have sometimes felt inclined to get a rubber stamp manufactured with the words "Translation of Form is Impossible," or something of the kind, and impress it at hazard on the margins of the "copy" of this book, that the printer may reproduce it and keep it before readers constantly, in season and out of season. On the whole, one may say that Sir John's style is that of the better but simpler class of verse romance—*dismetred*, freed from rhyme, and from the expletives which were the curse of rhymed verse romance itself, but arranged for the most part in very short sentences, introduced (exactly like those of a child telling stories) by "And." I open a page of Halliwell's edition absolutely at random the sentences are not quite so short as they are sometimes, but there are eleven of them in thirty-three lines of large and widely spaced print, ten of which begin with "and," and the eleventh with "also."<sup>1</sup> Every now and then, especially when he comes to the choice things—the "Lady of the Land," the "Watching of the Sparhawk," the "Origin of Roses," the "Valley of the Devil's Head"—he sometimes expands his sentences and makes them slightly more periodic, but they are still rather cumulative than anything more. He is most elaborate (and not unequal to his elaboration) in the account of the Great Cham's court, and of that of Prester John. But the real secret of his extraordinary success is his positive mastery of the fact that for certain purposes, and among them pure narration and description, a simple "writing down" of simple conversational style is the best device possible. And this is how he does it.

And some men say that in the Isle of Lango is yet the daughter of Hippocrates, in form and likeness of a great dragon, that is a hundred fathom of length; as men say for I have not seen her. And they of the Isles call her, Lady of the Land. And she lieth in an old castle, in a cave, and sheweth twice or thrice in the year. And she doth no harm to no man, but if men do her harm. And she was thus changed and transformed, from a fair damsel, into likeness of a dragon, by a goddess, that was cleped Diana. And men say, that she shall so endure in that form of a dragon, unto

<sup>1</sup> Compare the Wychlite "Prodigal Son,"

the time that a knight come, that is so hardy, that dare come to her and kiss her on the mouth and then shall she turn again to her own kind, and be a woman again. But after that she shall not live long. And it is not long since, that a knight of the Rhodes, that was hardy and doughty in arms, said that he would kiss her. And when he was upon his courser, and went to the castle, and entered into the cave, the dragon lift up her head against him. And when the knight saw her in that form so hideous and so horrible, he fled away. And the dragon bare the knight upon a rock, maugre his head, and from that rock she cast him into the sea and so was lost both horse and man. And also a young man, that wist not of the dragon, went out of a ship, and went through the Isle, till that he came to the castle, and came in to the cave, and went so long till that he found a chamber, and there he saw a damsel that combed her head, and looked in a mirror, and she had much treasure about her, and he trowed, that she had been a common woman, that dwelled there to receive men to folly. And he abode, till the damsel saw the shadow of him in the mirror. And she turned her toward him, and asked him, what he would. And he said, he would be her leman or paramour. And she asked him if that he were a knight. And he said, nay. And then she said that he might not be her leman, but she bade him go again unto his fellows, and make him knight, and come again upon the morrow, and she should come out of the cave before him, and then come and kiss her on the mouth, and have no dread, "for I shall do thee no manner of harm, albeit that thou see me in likeness of a dragon. For though thou see me hideous and horrible to look on, I do thee to witness, that it is made by enchantment. For without doubt, I am none other than thou seest now, a woman, and therefore dread thee nought. And if thou kiss me, thou shalt have all this treasure, and be my lord, and lord also of all that isle." And he departed from her and went to his fellows to ship, and let make him knight, and came again upon the morrow, for to kiss this damsel. And when he saw her come out of the cave, in form of a dragon, so hideous and so horrible, he had so great dread, that he fled again to the ship, and she followed him. And when she saw that he turned not again, she began to cry, as a thing that had much sorrow, and then she turned again, into her cave, and anon the knight died. And since then, hitherwards, might no knight see her, but that he died anon. But when a knight cometh, that is so hardy to kiss her, he shall not die, but he shall turn the damsel into her right form and kindly shape, and he shall be lord of all the countries and isles abovesaid.

It is hardly necessary to do more (in commenting on this) than draw attention to the fact, natural at the time, that this, beautiful as it is, is only *half*—or, not to seem

ungrateful, let us say three-quarters—prose. It is too versicular—too much separated into batches like *Ossian*, and Blake, and Whitman. But the batches themselves are fairly prose-harmonised, for there was as yet no verse harmony sufficiently fixed upon English to impress itself unduly, and so the development of prose was helped.

The way in which Chaucer's prose has usually been treated is a curious illustration of one "way of the world" generally. There is nothing of which what may be called the *communis non-sensus* is more jealous than of success by the same man in different lines, and though this tendency is to some extent neutralised by one of the commonplaces which spring from common sense and temper common nonsense—to wit, that good poets are generally good prose-writers—it is not quite neutralised thereby. And so we find a rather general tendency to dismiss the prose wellings of the well undefiled as a kind of waste overflow—to be apologised for, or at best patronisingly dismissed, before turning to the real thing, the poetry. I shall endeavour to show that this is unjust, and to indicate the nature and causes of the injustice.

There is, of course, no doubt that Chaucer's matter (by which, after all, ninety-nine people out of a hundred judge) is, in all his prose pieces, comparatively uninteresting, that it is glaringly so beside that of Mandeville for the general reader, and that it appeals to far fewer specialists than that of Wyclif or even of Trevisa. The *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius is a most interesting book for the historical and comparative student of literature, but he is not exactly in a majority of the population, and for him Chaucer's translation only shares its interest with the original and the various other versions, from Alfred's prose in the ninth century, and the unknown Provençal's verse in the tenth, to Queen Elizabeth's attempt in the sixteenth. After the very attractive opening (which those who do know it generally know at best in extract) the *Astrolabe* has no interest at all for any but the small minority of scientific people who are not Philistines enough to despise "science out of

date" The *Tale of Melibee* is, it must be admitted, of a quite portentous dulness, he who writes these words, and who can read almost everything, doubts very much whether, short as it is, he ever read it quite and straight through until he braced himself up to the task for this book. The *Parson's Tale*, though not quite so *assommant* in substance, is not specially delightful, and, but for its autobiographic close, might seem, even to a diligent but not quite expert reader, a mere belated example of the stuff that we saw so plentifully in the last chapter<sup>1</sup>

But to students of prose rhythm, as of prose style generally, these four books or booklets have—or ought to have, if they seem at times to have missed exercising it in a most surprising manner—distinct and strong attraction, both in themselves and still more in reference to what has gone before. Indeed it is probably this very ignorance of what has gone before which has stood in the way of appreciation, especially when we take it in connection with the fact that there is, as has been said, next to nothing in Chaucer's matter to attract readers. People have accidentally or purposely taken up Mandeville, and been caught at once by his charm, they have gone to Wyclif as to an important historical character, a "Protestant hero," or something else unliterary, and have been surprised to find his prose not so bad, but they generally jump the prose *Canterbury Tales*, and they do not want to know about Astrolabes, or to be consoled in the Boethian manner.

Let us, for reasons which will appear of themselves, take the four works in reverse order,<sup>2</sup> chronologically speaking, and begin with the *Parson's Tale*. It is, as we have said, on an exact line certainly with most, probably with all, of the works reviewed in the last chapter—that

<sup>1</sup> The idea that in this tale Chaucer was burlesquing contemporaries or predecessors is an unhappy one. His humour was wide ranging, almost ubiquitous, but this was not a form that it was wont, or was likely, to take in such matter.

<sup>2</sup> Of course this order which is reversed is to some extent conjectural. But it is founded on some warranty of scripture and more of reason—which cannot always be said of such things.

is to say, it is a more or less close translation of a French or a Latin original, or of originals both Latin and French. It has the same necessary abundance of scriptural quotation to colour style as well as thought, the same prevalence of stock-subject and even stock-language, the same generally hortatory purpose distinguishing it from narrative, discussion, description, and the other more purely literary kinds. It could therefore hardly, unless Chaucer had taken the bit in his teeth and become *mainly* original—in which case he would probably have run away in verse,—be other than a new exercise on the old pattern. But I am much mistaken if that pattern is not dealt with after a distinctly altered fashion. In the first place, the contemporary, and beyond all reasonable doubt the student to some extent, if not the disciple, of Wyclif, being at the same time the most expert man alive at catching up and adapting literary forms and suggestions, could hardly fail to exhibit something of that logical-rhetorical connection of sentence and argument which is perhaps Wyclif's one real contribution to English prose. In the second, he could hardly fail himself to contribute to his individual sentence that new "well-girtness," that alert selection and disposition of vocabulary and phrase, which did him such yeoman's service in his verse. It is true that the application of these often leaves the piece little better than a Wyclifite tract on one side, or a pious but uninspired exhortation on the other, but (especially at beginning and end) they do raise it somewhat out of this, while the genuineness of the *coda* might be proved by style alone. But certainly if Chaucer had left no prose save this Tale, the common estimate of him as a prose writer would have little that is unjust in it.

In the *coda* itself occur two of those curious and interesting waifs of blank verse—

And many a song and many a lecherous lay,

And grant me grace of very penitence,

which are to count for so much, and at the same time to be of such dangerous account, in English prose henceforth.

But for more examples of these (as may be known to some who do not know much else about the subject) we must go backwards or onwards to the *Tale of Melibee*. Grievous thing as it is to read, it has this as a whole for the mere casual observer, and still more for the student of English prose, that in its beginning the author seems to have got the swing of his "riding rhyme" so thoroughly in his head that, though completely eschewing rhyme itself, he cannot avoid metre. Why the Host, who, with the apparent approval of the company, had cut short the very promising and delightful parody of *Sir Thopas*, should, even in deference to the courteous and piteous request of the poet—

And lat me tellen al my tale, I pree—

have (apparently with the same approval) forborne all objection to, and even intimated some admiration of, *Melibeus*, is one of the Chaucerian lesser mysteries, not unfathomable perhaps, but not to be solved in any one fashion that can be taken as certain, and of course irrelevant here.

In point of form, however (though it also presents something of a problem there), the difficulty is not considerable, though the fact is most interesting. The Tale opens with a batch of almost exactly cut blank verse lines—with a sequence, that is to say, of rhythmical clauses which is, almost as it stands, an example of Shakespearian blank verse, lengthened and shortened at discretion, as thus

A young | man called | Melibe|us, might|y and rich, | begat  
 Upon | his wife, | that call|èd was | Prudence,  
 A daugh|ter which | that call|èd was | Sophie  
 Upon | a day | befell  
 That he | for his | disport | is went | into  
 The field|ès him | to play  
 His wife | and eke | his daugh|ter hath | he left  
 Inwith | his house, | of which | the dor|ès wer|en fast | yshette  
 Three of | his old|è foes | it han | espyed

After this the <sup>\*\*\*</sup>run is more broken, but the cadence occurs scatteredly for some pages, as follows

Prudence, | his wife, | as far | forth as | she durst,  
Besought | him of | his weep|ing for | to stint

For which | resoun | this no|ble wife | Prudence  
Suffered | her hus|band for | to weep | and cry  
As for | a cer|tain space | and when | she saw

This Mel|ibee | answered | anon | and said, |  
"What man," | quoth he, | "should of | his weep|ing stint  
That hath | so great | a caus|e for | to weep

And I could add dozens more, though they become less numerous and less consecutive as the Tale goes on

Now the explanation of this curious phenomenon is, I think, not very far to seek. There is not the slightest probability that it is the case of Layamon over again, only in more surprising circumstances—that Chaucer is really trying to write blank verse a hundred and fifty years or so before Surrey, but cannot keep it up. Any logic which could lead to such a conclusion would be the logic of Bakespearism. The only unrhymed verse he could have known was alliterative and unmetred (a scheme which he distinctly eschewed) or else allied with totally different metres.

On the other hand, there is nothing more natural than that a man who has an exquisite ear for rhythm, who has been writing thousands and almost tens of thousands of five-foot iambics for years past, and who is endeavouring to write somewhat elaborate prose, should let it, perhaps not at first quite consciously, run into the mould most familiar to his brain. As he goes on he either finds the attempt too troublesome or (which is on the whole more likely) finds the effect disagreeable and drops it—though, as a matter of fact, he cannot avoid falling into it again and again.

And this | same So|lomon | saith af|terward  
That by | the sorrow|ful vi|sage of | a man  
The fool | correct|eth and | amend|e]th | himself

Nor is *Melibee* deficient in interest, from the same point of view, as a fairly elaborate attempt, though in the most dreary material, to tell a tale in prose—a thing which, outside of the stories with which preachers embellished



their sermons, was not yet common. But its chief value is as an experiment (conscious or unconscious) in an obvious, a never entirely abandoned, but, on the whole, a mistaken, attempt to adorn prose by calling in the *direct* aid of metre. And when it is remembered that this attempt of itself impresses and expresses the change of generally dominant rhythm from trochaic to iambic, it may seem hardly extravagant to call it immense in its consequences and its symptomatic value<sup>1</sup>.

The *Astrolabe* treatise could not give us very much, but it gives us something more than a little. As the bulk of it consists in strictly practical and indeed mechanical rules, put as shortly and simply as possible for the instruction of a child, nothing but clearness could or ought to be expected from its style, and it is, no doubt, translated pretty closely—be it from Messahala, be it from another. But, even as our first practical scientific treatise by an accomplished man of letters in English, it must count, and for the sake of its admirable exordium it must count still more. This has escaped notice less than almost any other piece of Chaucer's prose, and it certainly exhibits, more than any other, that astonishing *ease* which distinguishes his verse. The archaisms in it are exceedingly few, and the construction flows with an urbane and well-bred mean between mere colloquialism and elaborate rhetoric which reminds one of the best French or English examples of the late seventeenth and earlier eighteenth century, but which does *not* remind the present writer of any French prose before a period considerably later than Chaucer's.

Little Lewis, my son, I have perceived well by certain evidences thine ability to learn sciences touching numbers and proportions, and as well consider I thy busy prayer in special to learn the treatise of the astrolabe. Then, forasmuch as a philosopher saith, he wrappeth him in his friend that condescendeth to the rightful

---

<sup>1</sup> It ought not to be lost sight of that Chaucer makes the same mistake (naturally enough) that Surrey and all the early dramatic and other blank versers made, that of keeping to the single moulded line. The devices whereby Mr. Ruskin used and almost abused blank verse in prose to no fatal effect, and even to great advantage, were necessarily hidden from a first experimenter.

prayers of his friend, therefore have I given thee a sufficient astrolabe as for our horizon, compounded after the latitude of Oxenford, upon which by mediation of this little treatise, I purpose to teach thee a certain number of conclusions appertaining to the same instrument I say a certain of conclusions, for three causes The first cause is this, trust well that all the conclusions that have been found, or else possibly might be found in so noble an instrument as an astrolabe, be unknown perfectly to any mortal man in this region, as I suppose Another cause is this, that soothly in any treatise of the astrolabe that I have seen there be some conclusions that will not in all things perform their behests And some of them be too hard to thy tender age of ten year to conceive

But by far the most interesting piece that Chaucer has left for our purpose is his most considerable and very probably his earliest—the translation of the Boethian *Consolation of Philosophy* It happened, most fortunately, that the original is a mosaic of verse and prose in alternate instalments, and more fortunately still, that Chaucer did not attempt, with one external exception,<sup>1</sup> to translate the *metra* into verse Those who have regretted that he did not have surely been most short-sighted Translations of verse in verse are, very frequently, not worth the paper they are written on, become of supreme value scarcely once in a hundred years, and in almost every case, when written by a poet, take the place of something that would have been of much greater value But verses of the more ambitious kind—and the *metra* of Boethius are nearly always that, and not seldom justify the ambition of their writer—necessitate, if they are not to be simply tortured or travestied, a certain height of style in the prose which is to render them Now about 1380, shortly after which date the English *Boethius* was probably composed, an English Longinus might have overhauled all Middle English prose writing without finding any “height of style” anywhere He must have gone back to Anglo-Saxon and Ælfric to find anything like that, and the sources of it, which had been open to Ælfric, were now closed to a writer of the modern tongue, though much

<sup>1</sup> The piece called “The Former Age,” which, for the last half century, has been included among the *Minor Poems*, and which is, in part at least, a version of Bk. II Met.

more splendid and abundant springs were waiting for him to tap them

The extreme sensitiveness of ear to such cadences as he knew, which we have noted in the *Meliboëus*, shows itself at first in the *Boethius*, also and still more curiously At the close of the first *metrum* occurs what is<sup>1</sup> undoubtedly an echo of the elegiac metre of the original But this must have been simply an accidental retention of rhythm in an ear abnormally gifted with the power not merely of recognising but of recording it That was only the way *not* to do it

But the way to do it was not far off, and Chaucer soon struck into that way My favourite example of his proficiency has always been the Fifth Metrum of the First Book, *O stelliferi conditor orbis* The Latin and the English appear side by side below, and will give a good example of the manner in which Chaucer rises to the difficulty of vocabulary But the beautiful *Quisquis composito serenus aevo*, which precedes it, has an English representative which is even better for our purpose, because it is, as a whole, worth studying by itself, and not mainly as a translation

O stelliferi conditor orbis,  
Qui perpetuo nixus solio  
Rapido caelum turbine versas,  
Legemque pati sidera cogis,  
Ut nunc pleno lucida cornu  
Solis fratris et obvia flammis  
Condat stellas Luna minores

O thou maker of the wheel  
that beareth the stars, which that  
art y-fastened to thy perdurable  
chair, and turnest the heaven  
with a ravishing *swergh*, and  
constrainest the stars to suffer thy  
law, so that the moon some time  
shining with her full horns, with  
all the beams of the sun her  
brother, hideth the stars that be  
less

---

<sup>1</sup> I do not wish to repeat the argument stated in *Hirst Pros* 1 pp 8 10  
I shall only say that the reproduction in

O ye, my friendes, what or whereto avaunted ye me to be weleful?  
For he that hath fallen stood not in stedfast degree  
of the rhythm of

Quid me felicem toties jactastis amici,  
Qui cecidit stabili non erat ille gradu

admits, to my mind, of no dispute (The hexameters of the A V, though  
undoubted curiosities, are still purer accidents, ~~being~~ no notice here)

Whoso | it be | that is clear | of virtue, | sad, | and well ordnat  
 of living, | that hath put | under foof | the proud words, | and looketh  
 upright | upon either fortune | —he | may hold | his cheer | undis-  
 comfited | The rage nor the menaces of the sea, commoving or  
 chasing upward heat from the bottom, *ne* shall not move that man,  
*ne* the unstable mountain that hight Vesevus, that writheth out  
 through his broken chiminees<sup>1</sup> smoking fire, *ne* the way of thunder  
 light that is wont to smiten high towels, *ne* shall not move that man  
 Where to then, o wretches, dread ye tyrants that be wood and  
 felenous without any strength? Hope after nothing noi dread  
 naught, and so shalt thou disarm[en] the ire of this unmighty  
 tyrant But who so that, | quāking, | dreadeth | or des̄ireth | thiŋg  
 that | nis not stāble | of his right, | that mān | that so doth | hath  
 cast | away | his shield | and removed | from his place | and enlāceth  
 him | in the chāin | with the which | he may be drawn<sup>[.]</sup>

The first of these indicates, it has been said, a fine choice of vocabulary and a command of stately phrase, but the second, as it seems to me, betrays something higher and something more directly in a concatenation with our enquiry. The hendecasyllabics of the original are very good, they show the power of that remarkable metre for dignity as well as for the Catullian grace. You might, with an ear so apt to catch an alien rhythm as Chaucer's, keep it exactly as, with a single change of word-place only, he does or could have done in

Fortu|namque tu|ens u|tramque | rectus

And up|right upon | either | fortune | looketh

But Chaucer avoids this throughout, and substitutes throughout a grave prose clause-and-sentence order which need not fear comparison with things much later and better furnished with patterns. Suggestions have, I believe, been made that he was indebted to French versions as well as to the Latin original for his translation, and as far as the mere construing goes I should think it not unlikely. But (as I have already had, and shall have, frequently to remind readers) French prose order will give very little help indeed for English composition.

<sup>1</sup> Chiminees in original, nearer French, and slightly *varying*, though not really *altering*, the rhythm

on the contrary, the more you keep it the worse your translation will be, and the less you keep it the better. Such a repetition—of which there is no suggestion in the

Latin—as “ne shall not move that man” may be regarded from different points of view as an ornament, and as a blemish, and some might prefer “smoking fires” moved back to a place before “through his,” etc. But the last sentence, as scanned and divided above, is, I venture to think, a very fine English sentence indeed, and one of which no English prose writer of the greater clans, from Hooker to Cardinal Newman, need be ashamed, while the dochmiac for clause ending in “undiscomfited” could not have been surpassed if Chaucer had been “doing it on

purpose” “Hōpe | āfter nōthing | nōr dreed | naught” is similarly complete in its larger way. With such a diploma-piece it is Chaucer who may claim the fatherhood of English rhythmical prose, much more securely than that of English metrical poetry. And I have begun the process of regular foot-analysis with him accordingly.

— The contribution to prose form thus made at the close of the fourteenth century has, therefore, been somewhat undervalued or misvalued generally, the much-abused and belaboured fifteenth has had the blows and bad language usually bestowed upon its poetry a little softened in respect of its prose. Mr Earle, always enthusiastic when he saw his opportunity, perceived in it once more “a great era of prose,” “prose mature and excellent,” “an elevated position in the history of English prose,” “the second time [the tenth was the first] when the language has reached what may be described as a summit, a stage of perfection.” I could only subscribe to this in respect of Malory and (borrowing<sup>1</sup> a little from the sixteenth) of part of Berners. But I should myself describe it as an age of most various and important development in prose, which was not in the least

<sup>1</sup> This borrowing is, in fact, almost always made by literary historians, for both prose and verse, in regard to Skelton and Hawes, as well as to Berners and Fisher.

"eclipsed," as Mr Earle thought, by the prose of the Renaissance, but, on the contrary, was a necessary stage to that Renaissance prose itself. And, what is more, the latter part of this stage was, to a great degree, what we have never had since Old English, if then—a conscious one.

The widening and varying of the range and methods of prose by its application to new subjects, which we have seen beginning in the late fourteenth, now widens and varies itself still more. In history the translation (with a few original insets) of Trevisa is followed by a series of really original or at least first-hand English chroniclers, with Capgrave at their head, who, if they are not yet historians, will teach their successors to be so. The famous collection of the *Paston Letters* shows us vernacular letter-writing—one of the most powerful instruments in the formation of general prose style—in full operation. The work of Sir John Fortescue introduces to the same vernacular new subjects of the most important kind—law, what we may almost call political economy, and their kindred matters. Above all, on the serious side, we have the remarkable document—one of the most remarkable in the formal history of English prose style—of Pecoek's *Repressor*.

This book was written by an equally remarkable person, whose faculty of making himself hated<sup>1</sup> was probably not unconnected with a certain vigour and originality of character, and who certainly was among the most vigorous and original of writers in the older English prose. The fact that his experiments were

<sup>1</sup> That he was so at the time is certain. He has had vicissitudes since. Although he attacked the Lollards, Foxe and other early Protestant writers "took him up" as a victim of his brother bishops. When he came to be thoroughly studied by an impartial editor, Babington, his levity of doctrine, his self seeking and other bad things, made themselves clear. But Mr James Gairdner rather champions him in his *Paston Letters*, and I have seen other recent attempts in the same way. He seems to me—and I have paid some attention to him—to have been not unlike his later compatriot, Archbishop Williams, a born "schemer" (Mr S. R. Gardiner slipped the word in his *DNB* apology for Williams) and a very untrustworthy person both in politics and religion, but one of great ability, in almost all ways, and specially notable in English prose.

directed in the wrong way only gives him the greater interest. The general principle of the *Repressor* was to carry the war into the enemy's country by using the enemy's weapon. Wyclif, his immediate followers, and the Lollards who carried his methods to furthest degrees of exaggeration and extravagance, had employed the vernacular, had "appealed to the people." But Wyclif, who, though he could argue well enough, preferred, as was natural, to argue in Latin for the most part, mainly employed assertion and abuse in English, and we may be certain that the usual Lollard did this still more. Now Pecock obviously wished to carry the whole scholastic method of argument into English, and into the service of his (at that time) dangerous attempt to support authority by reason. In order to do this he essayed the enormous task of transferring bodily the argumentative style and method of the schoolmen, and the technical terms of theology and philosophy, into the vulgar tongue. The latter he effected by reviving the Anglo-Saxon practice (which is sparingly observable throughout the earlier Middle English period, but never pursued on anything like his scale) of manufacturing English compounds for those of Greek and Latin. "Circumscription" is "about-writing", to "prevent" is to "before-bar." But in the further part of his endeavour he had to lift the elaborate Latin periodic clause and sentence, with their intricate keyings and gearings of accord between adjectives and substantives, relatives and antecedents, nouns and verbs, into a language which had already lost most of its inflexions, and was almost daily losing more. Here is a passage or two

Even as grammar and divinity be two diverse faculties and cunnings, and therefore be unmeddled, and each of them hath his proper to him bounds and marks, how far and no farther he shall stretch himself upon matters, truths, and conclusions, and not to entermete, neither entermeene, with any other faculty's bounds, and even as saddlery and tailory be two diverse faculties and cunnings, and therefore be unmeddled, and each of them hath his proper to him bounds and marks, how far and no farther he shall stretch himself forth upon matters, truths, and conclusions, and

not intercommune with any other craft or faculty in conclusions and truths so it is that the faculty of the said moral philosophy and the faculty of pure divinity, or the Holy Scripture, be two diverse faculties, each of them having his proper to him bounds and marks, and each of them having his proper to him truths and conclusions to be grounded in him, as the before-set six first conclusions shew

Of which first principal conclusion thus proved followeth further this corollary, that whenever and wherever in Holy Scripture, or out of Holy Scripture, be written any point or any governance of the said law of kind, it is more verily written in the book of man's soul than in the outward book of parchment or of vellum, and if any seeming discord be betwixt the words written in the outward book of Holy Scripture and the doom of reason, writ in man's soul and heart, the words so written withoutforth ought be expounded and be interpreted and brought for to accord with the doom of reason in thilk matter, and the doom of reason ought not for to be expounded, glazed, interpreted, and brought for to accord with the said outward writing in Holy Scripture of the Bible, or aughtwhere else out of the Bible Forwhy, when ever any matter is treated by it which is his ground, and by it which is not his ground, it is more to trust to the treating which is made thereof the ground than by the treating thereof by it which is not thereof the ground, and if thilk two treatings ought not discord, it followeth that the treating done by it which is not the ground ought to be made for to accord with the treating which is made by it the ground And therefore this corollary conclusion must needs be true

It will, of course, be obvious to everybody that if this example of Pecock's had been followed we should have been in more than danger of falling into the same slough of despond into which Germany fell some centuries later, and from which she was scarcely extracted till our own days by Heine, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche Pecock's propositions are all perfectly logical, they are disposed with all the art, though with none of the lightness, of a Socratic-Platonic dialogue, the repetitions are defensible, as showing a clear determination to leave no loophole open, and the compound phrases like "proper-to-him" (*sibi proprium*) are just and exact equivalents of the Latin in which beyond doubt the Bishop was thinking as he wrote But the total result is simply ghastly, and it is eminently un-English. As to any harmonious adjustment



of rhythm, or indeed any distinct rhythm at all, being got out of such a fariago of technicalities, it is obviously impossible

The curious Anglifications of compounds do not appear in these passages, indeed, as is again obviously natural, they appear only now and then sporadically as occasion requires them, though a very long list could be drawn up at need. But they could hardly in any case be improvements, and there is an important *general* objection to them which may not be so obvious. As was pointed out above, the nascent advantages of the new tongue were already, and were to be still more, due to the mingling of Teutonic and Romance elements, and to the different rhythmical values which distinguished them. By surrendering Greek, Latin, and French words for merely "Saxon" equivalents you remain possessed of the Saxon word-rhythm only. We shall meet the objection to naturalising foreign words in English again and again, in fact, it is quite lively to-day among many respectable folk. But there is no doubt that it is to this perpetual admission of new blood—to the naturalising of words, often with anglicised forms and generally with anglicised pronunciation, yet retaining something of the balance, the colour, the rhythmical value of the original tongue—that English owes its unmatched richness and variety<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless—though it may be quite certain that Pecock's immediate object was merely to convey his meaning, and that the means which he adopted would have been imitated by English prose generally at the peril of loss of all style, and to certain destruction of harmonious rhythm—his writings still bear testimony to an unconscious exploration and prospecting in the realms of prose itself

<sup>1</sup> I remember once startling, or rather horrifying, a foreign man of letters by saying that a language could not have too many synonyms or quasi-synonyms for expressing the same idea. And one of the subsidiary excellences of this diversity is that each of these synonyms will bring its different rhythmical and acoustic colour for use on the ear palette. The excellent Mason (*v* App II) saw this already before the middle of the eighteenth century. The ever unfortunate "Revisers" of the Bible did *not* see it, towards the end of the nineteenth

How these writings can be described as "clear and pointed in style," as they have been in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, I profess myself humbly unable to understand. It is quite true that there are sentences which, to use a phrase of his own very context, "by great cunning of preaching and by savoury uttering thereof" might deserve such commendation. But again in the same context occurs a sentence like this

This is now said of me (God I take thereto into witness) for harm which I have known come by default, and the unhaving and the unknowing of this now said consideration, and for peril that such harms should in time after here come, if of this consideration no mention and warning were by me or by some other in writing before made

That is not absolutely despicable writing, but it is not "clear and pointed", it is clumsy, and rather Latin than English in general ordonnance. It is no shame to Pecoock, who would certainly have done much better later, but it should put him in his proper place and not out of it.

The special and direct interest of the famous *Paston Letters* for our matter could not be great, but they, like the much duller stuff of Capgrave and others, still bear indirectly upon it. The main interest and attraction of the *Letters* themselves is that—subtracting the large amount of technical and documentary matter which could not concern us—they are genuine, direct, and unforced utterances of private persons about their own affairs. The alloy, if not of actual insincerity and "faking," yet of a certain side-eye on a possible reader who is not the person addressed—an alloy present in nearly all the most famous collections of letter-writing except perhaps Cowper's,<sup>1</sup>—is nowhere and could not possibly be anywhere in them. Even such a man as William Botoner, Worcester or Wyrcester<sup>2</sup>—chronicler, and, as we should now put it, professional man of letters, with the hankering after

<sup>1</sup> And yet a poet so inevitably writes *urbis et orbis*, that some *publicaturism* may unconsciously exist even in his familiar prose.

<sup>2</sup> Not "William of Worcester," as he is sometimes improperly called. In that order of designation he was "William of Bristol."

French literature which is characteristic of the time, a good liberal education, and what we may call fair scholarship,—does not “write book” any more than the notable and really admirable Margaret Paston herself, though he spells a little less wildly. But it is of almost the first importance to remember that, at a very short time previously, it is of the highest improbability that even one of these Letters would have been written in English at all. They would have been in French (as a few of them actually are) or in Latin, as almost equally private letters of Ascham’s, for some part of his life, are nearly a century later. And this handling “of all things and some others” again in the written vernacular, could not but exercise its effect on style, which is our wider, and prose-rhythm, which is our narrower, subject.

In Pecock’s younger contemporary, Caxton, on the other hand, we find, perhaps for the first time, the conscious research of style. Again and again he tells us how, in that process of study and translation through which he went before devoting himself to the great accomplishment of popularising, through the printing-press, literature of the most diverse kinds in English, he had been struck and daunted by the inferiority of his English instrument, the difficulty of getting an adequate effect out of it, and the superiority of the “fair language” of French. Except his production (how Heaven knows) of Malory, and his reproduction of Chaucer, nothing that Caxton printed is of the first value intrinsically. But all deserves the benefit of the definition of Goethe as to the duty of the scholar, that “if he cannot accomplish he shall exercise himself.” And here at last he has the further benefit of our knowledge, due to himself, that he was exercising himself consciously.

It would not be exactly critical to say that these pains of Caxton’s own brought him great profit as a translator from the point of view of style, or largely increased the treasury and pattern-storehouse of accomplished English prose. But they certainly show more than decent accomplishment, and by the variety of their subjects

they must have exercised that subtle influence which has been so much dwelt on, while their direct evidence of conscious rhetorical study is invaluable. Moreover, for one thing that he did, if only ministerially, Caxton cannot be thanked too much or set too high. For the position which the fifteenth century (with its, in literature, necessary annexe of the first quarter or third of the sixteenth) bears in the history of English prose, is due to three persons—Malory, Fisher, and Berners, and the greatest of these three is Malory, and, so far as investigation has hitherto gone, we should have known nothing of Malory but for Caxton—which thing, if the sins of printers and publishers were twenty times as great even as they seemed to the poet Campbell or to my late friend Sir Walter Besant, let it utterly cancel and wash them away.

I do not know (or at least remember) who the person of genius was who first announced to the world that Malory was “a compiler.” The statement is literally quite true (we may even surrender the Beaumains part and wish the receivers joy of it) in a certain lower sense, and exquisitely absurd as well as positively false in a higher. But it does not directly concern us. The point is that this *compilator compilans compilative in compilationibus compilandis* has, somehow or other, supplied a mortar of style and a design of word-architecture for his brute material of borrowed brick or stone, which is not only miraculous, but, in the nature even of miraculous things, uncomparable from any predecessor. Even if that single “French book” which some have used against him from his own expressions, were to turn up, as it has never turned up yet, his benefit of clergy would still remain to him, for no French originals will give English clerkship of this kind and force. Moreover, as shall be more fully shown and illustrated presently, he had certainly English as well as French originals before him, and how he dealt with one at least of these we can show confidently, and as completely as if we had been present in Sir Thomas’s *scriptorium*, in the ninth year of the reign of King

Edward the Fourth, and he had kindly told us all about it<sup>1</sup>

"Original" in the only sense that imports to us, Malory can have had none—except perhaps the unknown translator or author of "Mandeville," on whom he has enormously improved. The *idée mère* of both styles—an idea of which in all probability both writers, and the earlier almost certainly, were quite unconscious—is the "unmetring" without "unrhythming" of the best kind of romance style, with its easy flow, its short and uncomplicated sentences, and its picturesque stock phrases freed from verse- or rhyme-expletive and mere catchword. But the process, in Malory's case, had better be illustrated without further delay by comparison of the two passages cited above, from Malory's *Morte* itself and the verse *Morte*, which is almost certainly of the first half of the century if not earlier, and the verbal identities in part of which cannot be mere coincidence.

Abbess, to you I knowlache here,  
That throw this elke man and me,  
(For we to gedyr han loved us  
dere),  
All this sorrowful war hath be,  
My lord is slain that had no pere,  
And many a doughty knight and  
free

Ysett I am in suche a place,

Through this man and me  
hath all this war been wrought,  
and the death of the most noblest  
knights of the world, for through  
our love that we have loved to-  
gether is my most noble lord  
slain. Therefore, Sir Launcelot,  
wit thou well I am set in such a  
plight to get my soul's health,  
and yet I trust, through God's

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult, or rather impossible, for those who have scant shelf room and a shallow purse to afford themselves many editions of the same book. But as the *Morte d'Arthur* is, taking various sorts and elements of greatness together, about the greatest book in Middle and early Modern English prose next to the Authorised Version, I have tried to provide myself with most of the modern editions, and have Southey's quartos, the two little beloved but badly printed sets (1816) in two and three duodecimos respectively, Wright's of 1858, Sir Edward Strachey's "Globe" edition of ten years later (rather unnecessarily castrated and modernised, but undoubtedly good for general use), Dr Sommer's of 1889, giving a careful reproduction, scarcely elsewhere to be found, of the original Caxton text, a great deal of learned apparatus and *Quellenforschung*, and an interesting essay by Mr Lang, and that with Sir John Rhys' introduction and Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations (2 vols 4to, 1894). Of the variations in text the only considerable one is the "Placebo and *Dirige*" in Lancelot, which first appeared in Wynkyn de Worde's edition of 1529, which is, however magnificent, rather more rhetorical than the rest, and which may be later.

My sowle heal I will abide  
 Tellè God send[e] me some  
 grace,  
 Through mercy of his woundès  
 wide,

After to have a sight of his face  
 At Doomsday on his right side  
 Therefore, Sir Lancelot du Lake,  
 For my love I now thee pray  
 My company thou aye forsake,  
 And to thy kingdom thou take  
 thy way,  
 And keep thy realm from war  
 and wrack,  
 And take a wife with her to play,

Unto God I pray, almighty king,  
 He give you together joy and  
 bliss<sup>1</sup>

grace, that after my death to  
 have a sight of the blessed face  
 of Christ, and at doomsday to  
 sit on his right side, for as sin-  
 ful as ever I was are sints in  
 heaven Therefore, Sir Lancelot,  
 I require thee and beseech  
 thee heartily, for all the love  
 that ever was betwixt us, that  
 thou never see me more in the  
 visage, and I command thee on  
 God's behalf, that thou forsake my  
 company, and to thy kingdom  
 thou turn again and keep well  
 thy realm from war and wrack  
 For as well as I have loved thee,  
 mine heart will not serve me to  
 see thee, for through thee and  
 me is the flower of kings and  
 knights destroyed Therefore,  
 Sir Launcelot, go to thy realm,  
 and there take thee a wife, and  
 live with her with joy and bliss,  
 and I pray thee heartily pray for  
 me to our Lord, that I may  
 amend my misliving

Now here, it will be observed, the verse is emphatically "no great shakes" It is not so bad as the contemporary exertations of the abominable Henry [sic] Lonelich or Lovelich, but it has a great deal of the ever-recurring expletive, the flat and nerveless phrase, and the slipshod rather than flowing movement of the worst verse-romances Still, it gives a fair "canvas," and this Sir Thomas takes, not even disdaining the retention of a few brighter stitches of his predecessor's, which he patches in, not fearing but welcoming, and mustering them into a distinct prose rhythm—treating them, in fact, just as

<sup>1</sup> *Morte d'Arthur*, Harl 2252, ed Furnivall (London and Cambridge, 1864), p 148 It had been printed earlier (1819) for the Roxburghe Club, and has been reprinted since (1903) by the E E T S with such alterations as the separation of the text into octaves The editor thinks that the parallels with Malory are only such as must occur when two writers "are following closely the same original" If this is the case, I know nothing of criticism It ought, however, perhaps, to be added that there are curious differences of opinion as to the value of the poem itself I cannot rank it high, but it is certainly better than Lonelich

Ruskin does his doses of blank verse And so, out of the substance and the general procession of the verse, he has woven a quite new rhythm, accompanying and modulating graceful and almost majestic prose of the best type There had been nothing in English prose before like the Queen's speech here, and it had been manufactured, as genius manufactures, out of a very commonplace web of English verse

The Lancelot dirge, as has been said, may be a later composition, at a time when (*v mf*) definite rhetorical devices were attempted It has at any rate no parallel in the verse, though this deals with the actual scene But that, more famous than either of them, of the "throwing of Excalibur," with its immensely interesting addition of Tennyson's re-versing from Malory himself, requires more notice

The kynge tornyd hym there he  
stode

To syr Bedwere, wytȝ wordys  
kene,

"Have Excalaber, my swerd  
good,

A better bioud was neuyr sene,  
Go, Caste it in the salt flode,

And thou shalt se wonder, as I  
wene,

hye the faste, for crosse on Rode  
And telle me what thou hast  
ther sene "

The knyght was bothe hende  
and free ,

To save that swerd he was fulle  
glad,

And thought, whethyr I better  
bee

yif neuyr man it After had ,  
And I it caste in to the see,

Off mold was neuyr man so mad  
The swerd he hyd vndyr A tree,

And sayd, "syr, I ded as ye me  
bad "

"What saw thou there?" than  
sayd the kynge,

"Telle me now, yiff thou can ,"

Therefore, said Arthur, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again, and tell me what thou there seest My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and haft were all of precious stones, and then he said to himself, If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree And as soon as he might he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water What sawest thou there? said the king Sir, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds That is untruly

"Sertes syr," he sayd, "nothyng  
But watres depe, And wawes  
wanne"

"A, now thou haste broke my  
byddynges"

Why haste thou do so, thou  
false man?

A nother bode thou muste me  
brynge"

Thanne carefully the knyght  
forthe Ranne,

And thought the swerd yit he  
wold hyde,

And keste the scauberke in the  
flood,

"Yif Any Aventurs shall be-  
tyde,

There-by shall I se tokenys  
goode"

In-to the see hee lette the scau-  
berke glyde,

A whyle on the land hee there  
stode,

Than to the kyng he wente  
that tyde

And sayd, "syr, it is done by  
the Rode"

"Saw thou Any wondres more?"

"Sertys syr, I saw nought"

"A! false traytor," he sayd  
thore,

"Twyse thou haste me treson  
wroght,

That shall thou rew sely sore,  
And be thou bold it shalbe  
bought"

The knyght than cryed, "lord,  
thyn ore,"

And to the swerd[?] sone he  
sought

Syr bedwere saw that bote was  
beste,

And to the good swerde he wente,  
In to the see he hyt keste,

Than myght he see what that it  
mente,

There cam An hand, wyt<sup>h</sup> outen  
Reste,

said of thee, said the king,  
therefore go thou lightly again,  
and do my command as thou  
art to me lief and dear, spare  
not, but throw it in. Then Sir  
Bedivere returned again, and  
took the sword in his hand,  
and then him thought sin and  
shame to throw away that noble  
sword, and so eft he hid the  
sword, and returned again, and  
told to the king that he had  
been at the water, and done his  
commandment. What saw thou  
there? said the king. Sir, he  
said, I saw nothing but the  
waters wap and the waves wan.  
Ah traitor, untrue, said king  
Arthur, now hast thou betrayed  
me twice. Who would have  
wend that thou that hast been  
to me so lief and dear, and thou  
art named a noble knight, and  
would betray me for the riches  
of the sword. But now go again  
lightly, for thy long tarrying  
putteth me in great jeopardy of  
my life, for I have taken cold.  
And but if thou do now as I bid  
thee, if ever I may see thee, I  
shall slay thee with mine own  
hands, for thou wouldest for my  
rich sword see me dead. Then  
Sir Bedivere departed, and went  
to the sword, and lightly took it  
up, and went to the water side,  
and there he bound the girdle  
about the hilts, and then he  
threw the sword as far into the  
water as he might, and there  
came an arm and an hand above  
the water, and met it, and caught  
it, and so shook it thrice and  
brandished, and then vanished  
away the hand with the sword  
in the water. So Sir Bedivere  
came again to the king, and  
told him what he saw. Alas,



Oute of the water, And feyre it  
hente,  
And brandysshyd As it shuld  
braste,  
And sythe, as gleme, A-way it  
glente

To the kynge A-gayne wente  
he thare

And sayd, "leve syr, I saw An  
hand,

Oute of the water it cam Alle  
bare,

And thryse brandysshyd that  
Ryche brande"

"helpe me sone that I ware  
there"

he lede hys lord vnto that stronde,  
A ryche shippe wyt<sup>h</sup> maste And  
ore,

Full of ladyes there they fonde  
The ladyes, that were feyre and  
Free,

Curteysly the kynge gan they  
fonge,

And one, that bryghtest was of  
blee,

Wepyd sore, and handys wrange,  
"Broder," she sayd, "wo ys me,  
Fro lechyng hastow be to longe,  
I wote that gretely greuyth me,  
For thy paynès Ar full stronge"

The knyght kest A rewfulle  
rowne,

There he stode, sore and  
vnsownde,

And say, "lord, whedyr Ar ye  
bowne,

Allas, whedyr wylle ye fro me  
fownde?"

The kynge spake wyt<sup>h</sup> A sory  
sowne,

"I wylle wende A lytell stownde  
In to the vale of Avelovne,

A whyle to hele me of my  
wounde"

said the king, help me hence,  
for I dread me I have tarried  
over long Then Sir Bedivere  
took the king upon his back,  
and so went with him to that  
water side And when they  
were at the water side, even fast  
by the bank hove a litle barge,  
with many fair ladies in it, and  
among them all was a queen,  
and all they had black hoods,  
and all they wept and shrieked  
when they saw king Arthur  
Now put me into the barge, said  
the king and so he did softly  
And there received him three  
queens with great mourning, and  
so they set him down, and in  
one of their laps king Arthur  
laid his head, and then that  
queen said, Ah, dear brother,  
why have ye tarried so long  
from me? Alas, this wound on  
your head hath caught over  
much cold And so then they  
rowed from the land, and Sir  
Bedivere beheld all those ladies  
go from him Then Sir Bedi-  
vere cried, Ah, my lord Arthur,  
what shall become of me now  
ye go from me, and leave me  
here alone among mine enemies  
Comfort thyself, said the king,  
and do as well as thou mayest,  
for in me is no trust for to trust  
in For I will into the vale of  
Avilion, to heal me of my grievous  
wound And if thou hear  
never more of me, pray for my  
soul

We may indeed note here how this "compiler" succeeded, as to his mere matter, in compiling *out* Bedivere's

silly compromise of throwing the scabbard the second time, but still more the real things—his fashion and manner of style and treatment. These are weaker in the verse than in the original of the Guinevere passage, and he hardly takes anything literal in phrase, altering importantly when he does take something, as in the feeble expletive “deep.” But he weaves the whole once more into the most astonishing tissue of pure yet perfect prose rhythm. That it takes but little, as Tennyson showed, to make it once more into splendid verse of character as different as possible from the bald shambling sing-song of the early fifteenth-century man, is nothing against this. That you can get some actual blank verse or fragments of blank out of it is nothing again

That hast been [*un*]to me so lief and dear  
And thou art named a noble knight  
For thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead

For these (as such things in the right hands always do) act as ingredients, not as separable parts. They colour the rhythm, but they do not constitute it. They never correspond with each other.

It is not, however, to the great show passages of “the death and departing out of this world of them all,” of the Quest of the Graal, of the adventures of Lancelot and the rest, that it is necessary to confine the search for proof of Malory’s mastery of style and rhythm. One general symptom will strike any one who has read a fair amount of the *Morte* from our point of view. There are plenty of sentences in Malory beginning with “and”, but it is not the constant go-between and usher-of-all-work that it is in Mandeville. The abundance of conversation gets him out of this difficulty at once, and he seems to have an instinctive knowledge—hardly shown before him, never reached after him till the time of the great novelists—of weaving conversation and narrative together. Bunyan, and certainly most people before Bunyan’s day, with Defoe to some extent after him, seem to make distinct gaps between the two, like that of the scenes of a play—to have now a piece of narrative, now one of definite

"Tig and Tiri"<sup>1</sup> drama Malory does not His narrative order and his dialogue are so artistically adjusted that they dovetail into one another<sup>2</sup> Here is an instance, taken entirely at hazard, not better than a hundred or a thousand others, and perhaps not so good as some

And with that came the damosel of the lake unto the king and said, "Sir, I must speak with you in private" "Say on," said the king, "what ye will" "Sir," said the lady, "put not on you this mantle till ye have seen more, and in no wise let it come upon you nor on no knight of yours till ye command the bringer thereof to put it upon her" "Well," said King Arthur, "it shall be done as ye counsel me" And then he said unto the damosel that came from his sister, "Damosel, this mantle that ye have brought me I will see it upon you" "Sir," said she, "it will not beseem me to wear a knight's garment" "By my head," said King Arthur, "ye shall wear it or it come on my back, on any man that here is," and so the king made it to be put upon her, and forthwith she fell down dead, and nevermore spake word after, and was brient to coals

Here, in a sample as little out of the common way as possible, you may see the easy run of rhythm, the presence of a certain not excessive balance, tempered by lengthening and shortening of clauses, the breaking and knitting again of the cadence-thread, and even (which is really surprising in so early a writer) the selection, instinctive no doubt, but not the less wonderful, of an emphatic monosyllable to close the incident and paragraph. If a more picked example be wanted, nothing better need be sought than the often-quoted passage of the Chapel Perilous. While one of the best of all, though perhaps too long to quote, is that where Lancelot, after the great battle with Turquine (the exact locality of which, by the way, is given in the old histories of Manchester), comes to the Giant's Castle of the Bridge, and slays the bridge-guard, but riding into the castle yard, is greeted by "much people in doors and windows that said, 'Fair Knight thou art unhappy,'" for a close to the chapter

<sup>1</sup> The fit reader will not have forgotten this vivid Johnsonism (which for the moment puzzled two such not blunt wits as Hester Thrale's and Frances Burney's), dismissing all that was dramatic of a dialogue printed as between "*Figianes*" and "*Tiribazus*"

<sup>2</sup> It has been urged that he owes this also to "the French book" Not in this quarter will any one meet depreciation of the prose Arthurian romances But I think my often repeated caution as to translation applies here

The dominant of Malory's rhythm, as might indeed be expected in work so much based on French prose and verse and English verse, is mainly iambic, though he does not neglect the precious inheritance of the trochaic or amphibrachic ending, nor the infusion of the trochaic run elsewhere. His sentences, though sometimes of fair length, are rarely periodic enough, or elaborately descriptive enough, to need four-syllable and five-syllable feet and you may resolve sentence after sentence, as in the last passage noted, into iambs pure, iambs extended by a precedent short into anapæsts and iambs, or curling over with a short suffix into amphibrachs, and so getting in the trochee

And so | Śir Lān|cēlōt and | the dāmsēl | dēpartēd<sup>1</sup>

Yet, in some mysterious way, he resists, as has been said, the tendency to drop into poetry

Now hast thou || thy payment that thou hast so long deserved

is, as a matter of fact, an unexceptionable blank-verse line, preceded by an unexceptionable fragment in a fashion to be found all over Shakespeare, in Milton, and sometimes in all their better followers as well. Yet you would never dream of reading it in prose with any blank-verse rhythm, though the division at "payment" gives a fraction of further blank verse, which Shakespeare in his latest days, or Beaumont and Fletcher at any time, would have unhesitatingly written

I had thought of giving a few more rhythmical fragments in the way of a *bonne bouche*. But on going through the book (no unpleasant concession to duty) for I suppose nearer the fiftieth than the twentieth time, I found that, to do justice, *mere* fragments would hardly suffice. Quintilian, I suppose, would hardly have appreciated Malory's matter, but he must have admitted that the style was not of that "complexion sprinkled with

<sup>1</sup> "And so | Śir Lan|celot and | the *maid* | departed" would, of course, be pure blank verse, and very difficult to smuggle off in prose. But the little extra short of "dām|sēl" saves the whole situation, and abolishes the blank verse tendency

spots, bright, if you like, but too many and too different," which the sober Roman hated. Every now and then, indeed, there comes a wonderful symphonic arrangement, as in the close of the story of Balin. "Thus endeth the tale of Balin and Balan, || two brothers born in North-umberland, || good knights," || where I have put the double division to mark what we may almost call the prose-line, making a prose-stanza with no trace of verse in it. More complicated and more wonderful still is the rhythm of the dialogue between the sorceress Hellawes, damsel of the Chapel Perilous, and Sir Lancelot, while the Graal part is crowded with such things. But Malory never seems to put himself out of the way for them, they surge up suddenly in the clear flood of his narrative, and add life and flesh to it for a moment—and the flood goes on.

It must, however, be observed that this prose of Malory's, extraordinarily beautiful as it is, was a sort of half-accidental result of the combination of hour and man, and could never be repeated, save as the result of deliberate literary craftsmanship of the imitative, though of the best imitative, kind. As such it has been achieved in our own days, and in the proper place I may point out that the denigration of Mr Morris's prose as "Wardour Street" and the like is short-sighted and unworthy. It is then a product of the man directly, but not (or only in an indirect and sophisticated way) of the hour. In Malory's days there was a great body of verse-romance in English, with a half-conventional phraseology, which was not yet in any sense insincere or artificial. This phraseology lent itself directly to the treatment of Malory's subject, while the forms in which it was primarily arranged lent themselves in the same way, though less obviously, and after a fashion requiring more of the essence of the right man, to a simple but extremely beautiful and by no means monotonous prose rhythm, constantly introducing fragments of verse-cadence, but never allowing them to arrange themselves in anything like verse-sequence or metre. That the great popularity of the book—which is attested by

such outbursts against it as that of Ascham from the mere prosaic-Protestant-Philistine point of view, almost as well as by its eight black-letter editions between 1485 (Caxton's) and 1634 (Stansby's)—was to any large, to even any appreciable, extent due to conscious delight in this beauty of prose, it would be idle to pretend Milton may have seen its beauty when those younger feet of his were wandering in romance, and had not yet deserted it for Philistia and Puritania, when he forgathered with Lancelot, and Pelleas, and Pellinore, instead of with the constituents of "Smectymnuus," and the creatures of Cromwell. Spenser can hardly have failed to do so earlier, for though he has, with an almost whimsical perversity of independence, refused to know anything of Malory's Arthurian *matter*, the whole atmosphere and ordonnance of the *Faerie Queene* are Malorian. But that this popularity did influence Elizabethan prose few competent students of English literature have ever failed to recognise.

In passing from Malory to Berners (born just before Sir Thomas finished his book, but probably some not short time after he began it) and Bishop Fisher, who was a decade older than Berners himself, there is a drop even in the first case, and, as far as *matter* is concerned, a long one in the second. But the places of both are nearly as secure in our particular story. According to one theory, Berners has the very great influential importance of having brought "Euphuism" into England by his version of Guevara's *Horologe of Princes*, and his other moral Englishings of this and that tongue must have had weight. But for us he is the author, in descending value, of the famous and, in its way, unsurpassed *Froissart*, of *Huon of Bordeaux*, and of the rather ill-selected, but still interesting, *Arthur of Little Britain*. In these cases it is almost more probable, not to say certain, that he had Malory before him, than that Malory had Mandeville, and he sometimes comes hardly short of his "blessed original." But always more or less, and in his more independent work, as in the Prefaces of

the *Arthur* and *Froissart*, very particularly, he betrays a certain sophistication or "contamination" The presence of the printed book, and of the influences, good and bad, which accompany it, is with him

Although the direct influence of Malory on the romance-translations is, as acknowledged above, hardly to be doubted, it is true that much which may seem to a casual reader directly derived from the elder is common matter for both But these communities of origin, let it be said once more, are rather deceptive things, and even the certain study of a previous pattern leaves much to be credited to the student Berners did not exhibit his worthiness to the best in his romance versions In *Huon*, indeed<sup>1</sup>—though his original is almost a typical example of the later overgrown *Chanson de Geste*, which has sharked up, and but half digested, all sorts of romantic oddments originally extraneous to it,—he has a canvas of the right stuff in the earlier part of the story, and not a few windfalls in the accretions *Arthur of Little Britain*,<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, is a late romance with nothing early about it—a specimen of the *Amadis* kind regrafted on its French stock, full of "conjurer's supernatural," intricate adventures, typical (and palely typed) characters, with many other of the faults that are sometimes justly, though more often unjustly, charged against romance in general<sup>3</sup> The real fault of both stories, however, is that they are told long-windedly, and that Berners has not cared, or dared, or been able, to imitate Malory in correcting this defect If any one likes to turn to *Huon's* adjuration of the Emperor, whereby Raoul of Vienna meets his death, or to that remarkable series of scenes in which Arthur successively polishes off a lion, a giantess, her giant, a griffin, a few dozen knights, and

<sup>1</sup> Edited for the E E T S by Sir Sidney Lee

<sup>2</sup> Ed Utterson (London, 1814), a stately quarto, with very delectable illustrations from MS

<sup>3</sup> One cannot quarrel with Southey when he asked what on earth made Berners choose it when *Gyron le Courtois* and *Perceforest* were [as they are still] untranslated The inaccessibility of *Perceforest*, even in any modern French edition, has been a life long grief to me, for blackletter *non legitur* with my eyes

a spinning "mahomet," he will find the difference pretty soon

In considering his shortcomings there would be a lack of fairness, and even perhaps of aptitude in fact and phrase, if we accused poor Berners of being "ungrammatical." There was, thank Heaven! no *English Grammar* then, though, before long, people were to begin that series of "ill-mumbled masses" of the profane kind which have since endeavoured, in the first place, to make a ritual for English on the infinitely different basis of Latin, and, in the second, to draw up rules and conventions for a language which is almost wholly exception and idiom. It was not because Berners was ungrammatical, but because he was unrhetorical, that his sentences straddle and straggle in the way they go<sup>1</sup>—because he had not, like Malory, a genius of ordonnance for himself, or, like Fisher, a certain inherited custom of it from others.

But, on the other hand (in this case again differing from Malory, but coinciding with Fisher), he has no small desire to be rhetorical, and the two Prefaces (rather well known among the few students of this subject) to the *Arthur* and the *Froissart* betray the fact in the most unmistakable, though perhaps not in the happiest manner. In both of these it is evident that the Baron, exactly like the Bishop, is sedulously aping the order (*v mf*) of the "secular orators," although he knew himself to be "insufficient in the facondious art of rhetoric." But he has a few tricks of the said rhetoric already, especially the doublet—"chivalrous feats and martial prowesses," "uncunning and dark ignorance," etc.

These expressions, as well as a regret at his not having

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* to take an example, previously used by Professor Macaulay as an example of "ungrammaticalness," "And when these knights and other men of arms knew the will and answer of King Dampeter [Don Pedro the Cruel], whereby they reputed him right orgulous and presumptuous, and made all the haste they could to advance, to do him all the hurt they could." This is really a kind of "Thucydidean" syntax, to use the comparison as to which we differed with Mr Earle in the case of "The blaying of Cynewulf." It is "schemed to meaning," and the meaning is quite clear to any intelligent person.



command of "fresh ornate polished English," are from *Arthur of Little Britain*. In the *Froissart* Preface he tries a higher flight, having impeded his wings with more and gayer plumes of the same general feather. "Graces and thanks" is rather more than sufficiently pleonastic, but "shew, open, manifest, and declare" exaggerates beforehand (and not very improbably suggested) the ponderous triads which Scott puts into the mouth of Sir Robert Hazlewood of Hazlewood. "Inquire, desue, and follow," "eschew, avoid, and utterly fly," succeed, not without unintended application to the special subject "Acts, gests, and deeds," "labours, dangers, and perils," flock and throng and press behind. Nor are the principal words of these groups content to march alone—"sage counsels, great reasons, and high wisdoms" sees each noun provided with his harbingering adjective "in the best and most orgilous manner."

Now we may be tempted by our corrupt natures to laugh at this, and be inclined to have none of it, and greatly to prefer the rough, unpolished eloquence which has given us a very different style—the story of Orthon and the death of the Bruce, the siege of Aiguillon and the battle of Navarete, the revenging of Sir John Chandos, and that wonderful "blind man's buff" when Scots and English chased each other, without being able to find, in the wilds of Weardale and Tynedale round "the little Abbey, all brent, which was called in King Arthur's days La Blaunche Launde"<sup>1</sup>. And as far as mere delectation goes, this preference is beyond all doubt well founded. But it is not so from the historic point of view. Even these inspiring pages of Berners have something of the falsetto in them. What was quite natural in Malory has become half-artificial here. But the awkward and exaggerated rhetoricism of the Prefaces, though it looks far more artificial still, is really the novice's practice in a

<sup>1</sup> Nobody can ever hope to understand, and indeed I should have thought that nobody could enjoy, mediæval literature who is amused, or shocked, or even surprised by this unhesitating unification, as historically known and geographically associable facts, of the history of King Arthur and that of King Edward.

real art Already, especially in the less ambitious and less bedizened *Arthur* piece, there is balance, rhythm, accompaniment of sound to sense We may illustrate him with a passage from the *Floissart* Preface and the death of Robert Bruce

What condign graces and thanks men ought to give to the writers of histories, who, with their great labours, have done so much profit to the human life, they shew, open, manifest, and declare to the reader, by example of old antiquity, what we should inquire, desire, and follow, and also, what we should eschew, avoid, and utterly fly for when we (being unexpert of chances) see, behold, and read the ancient acts, gests, and deeds, how and with what labours, dangers, and perils they were gested and done, they right greatly admonish, *ensigne*, and teach us how we may lead forth our lives and faither, he that hath the perfect knowledge of others' joy, wealth, and high prosperity, and also trouble, sorow, and great adversity, hath the expert doctrine of all perils

Then he called to him the gentle knight, Sir James Douglas, and said before all the lords, Sir James, my dear friend, ye know well that I have had much ado in my days, to uphold and sustain the right of this realm, and when I had most ado, I made a solemn vow, the which as yet I have not accomplished, whereof I am right sorry, the which was, if I might achieve and make an end of all my wars, so that I might once have brought this realm in rest and peace, then I promised in my mind to have gone and warred on Christ's enemies, adversaries to our holy Christian faith To this purpose mine heart hath ever intended, but our Lord would not consent thereto, for I have had so much ado in my days, and now in my last enterprise, I have taken such a malady, that I can not escape And sith it is so that my body can not go, nor achieve that my heart desireth, I will send the heart in stead of the body, to accomplish mine avow And because I know not in all my realm, no knight more valiant than ye be, nor of body so well furnished to accomplish mine avow in stead of myself, therefore I require you, mine own dear especial friend, that ye will take on you this voyage, for the love of me, and to acquit my soul against my Lord God, for I trust so much in your nobleness and truth, that an ye will take on you, I doubt not, but that ye shall achieve it, and then shall I die in more ease and quiet, so that it be done in such manner as I shall declare unto you I will, that as soon as I am trespasssed out of this world, that ye take my heart out of my body, and embalm it, and take of my treasure, as ye shall think sufficient for that enterprise, both for yourself, and such company as ye will take with you, and present my heart to the holy sepulchre, where as our Lord lay, seeing my body can not come there, and take with you such

company and purveyance as shall be appertaining to your estate And wheresoever ye come, let it be known, how ye carry with you the heart of King Robert of Scotland, at his instance and desire to be presented to the holy sepulchre

As for Fisher, it may be at once admitted that the <sup>F</sup> interest of his prose is almost exclusively technical Not that it is contemptible in itself A sentence, for instance, like this <sup>1</sup>

    Nō creāture | māy exp̄ress | hōw joyfūl | the sinner is | when hē  
 knoweth | and understandeth | himself | to be delivered | from the  
 great | burdēn | and heaviness | of sin | —when hē feeleth | and  
 perceiveth | that hē is | delivered | utterly | and brought out | of  
 the danger | of so many | and great | perils | that hē was in, | whyles  
 hē continued | in sin, | when also | hē perceiveth | the clearness | of  
 his soul | and remembreth | the tranquillity | and peace | of his  
 conscience

is not an extraordinary one, but there is something in it which displays more of the period than we have usually seen before—something which reminds us, with not too much incongruity, that there were probably not two full decades between the death of its author and the birth of Richard Hooker Already there is in it—as the above division and quantification may help to bring out—that peculiar wave-like motion—insurg-ing, and recoiling, and advancing again, with individual movement not mechanically or mathematically correspondent, but rhythmically associable and complementary—which is essential to harmonious prose, and already this fluctuance demands and receives the more elaborate accompaniment in expression of pæons and dochmiacs

There is still more ambition of perhaps less strictly

<sup>1</sup> Fisher's *English Works*, 1 III (E E T S London, 1876) It may be a question whether the larger rhythms or foot groups should not be indicated, by the double || or otherwise I have actually done this in some cases, but in most it seemed to me that the punctuation should serve And I think that, for the public taste, symbols, like other things, *non sunt multiplicanda præter necessitatem*

technical accomplishment in the passage<sup>1</sup> which Professor Mayor specified, assigning it, correctly, to Oriental origin, and paralleling it from Ruckert, but not seeming to know or remember that it is one of the most favourite apologues of the *Gesta Romanorum* and similar collections

That man were put in great peril and jeopardy that should hang over a very deep pit holden up by a weak and slender cord or line, in whose bottom should be most *woode* and cruel beasts of every kind, abiding with great desire his falling down, for that intent when he shall fall down anon to devour him, which line or cord that he hangeth by should be holden up and stayed only by the hands of that man, to whom by his manifold ungentleness he hath ordered and made himself as a very enemy Likewise, dear friends, consider in yourself If now under me were such a very deep pit, wherein might be lions, tigers, and bears gaping with open mouth to destroy and devour me at my falling down, and that there be nothing whereby I might be holden up and succoured, but a broken bucket or pail which should hang by a small cord, stayed and holden up only by the hands of him to whom I have behaved myself as an enemy and adversary by great and grievous injuries and wrongs done unto him

Here is another

In which four, the noble woman Martha (as say the doctors entreating this gospel, and her life) was singularly to be commended and praised, wherefore let us consider likewise, whether in this noble countess may any thing like be found First, the blessed Martha was a woman of noble blood, to whom by inheritance belonged the castle of Bethany, and this nobleness of blood they have which descend of noble lineage Beside this there is a nobleness of manners, without which the nobleness of blood is much deficed, for as Boetius saith If ought be good in the nobleness of blood it is for that thereby the noble men and women should be ashamed to go out of kind from the virtuous manners of their ancestry before Yet also there is another nobleness, which ariseth in every person by the goodness of nature, whereby full often such as come of right poor and un noble father and mother, have great abilities of nature, to noble deeds Above all these same there is a fourth manner of nobleness, which may be called an increased nobleness, as by marriage and affinity of more noble persons such as were of less condition may increase in higher degree of nobleness In every of these, I suppose, this countess was noble First, she came of noble blood lineally descending of King Edward III within the fourth degree of the same Her father was John, Duke of Somerset, her mother was called Margaret, right noble as well in manners as in

<sup>1</sup> Fisher's *English Works*, i 90, 91 (H. L. T. S. London, 1876)

blood To whom she was a very daughter in all noble manners, for she was bounteous and liberal to every person of her knowledge or acquaintance Avarice and covetise she most hated, and sorrowed it full much in all persons, but specially in any that belonged unto her She was also of singular easiness to be spoken unto, and full courteous answer she would make to all that came unto her Of marvellous gentleness she was unto all folks, but specially unto her own, whom she trusted and loved right tenderly Unkind she would not be unto no creature, nor forgetful of any kindness or service done to her before, which is no little part of very nobleness She was not vengeable, nor cruel, but ready anon to forget and to forgive injuries done unto her at the least desire or motion made unto her for the same Merciful also and piteous she was unto such as was grieved and wrongfully troubled, and to them that were in poverty or sickness or any other misery To God and to the church full obedient and tractable, searching His honour and pleasure full busily A wariness of herself she had alway to eschew every thing that might dishonest any noble woman, or distain her honour in any condition Trifelous things that were little to be regarded she would let pass by, but the other that were of weight and substance wherein she might profit she would not let for any pain or labour to take upon hand These and many other such noble conditions left unto her by her ancestors she kept, and increased them with a great diligence

These are both taken from the long sermon-commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, which is Fisher's chief English work But I do not know that the two elaborate funeral discourses on Henry VII and his mother, Lady Margaret, are not the most important places for us, because of the definite rhetorical striving which they show us in their author, and of the sometimes quite distinct means and instruments which we see him applying He has given us, in the discourse on the King, perfectly frank acknowledgment that (as any one acquainted with the matter must see at once without the confession) he is "using the same order which the secular orators have in their funeral orations most diligently observed" But his rhetorical exertations are by no means confined to the mere "order" of Commendation, Exhortation to pity, and Comfort The divisions are compounded of clauses studiously, and with no little art, now paralleled, now built on each other And we observe throughout, both in this and in the "Lady

"Margaret" pieces, an abundant and even superabundant use of those groups of synonyms, or all but synonyms, which we noted in Berners "Wisdom, learning, and virtue" is not quite an example of this as far as the meanings go, though it has the group-effect in sound "Dangers and jeopardies," near to it, are more exactly the thing. But the "Morning remembrance at the month's mind of Margaret"—an alliteration which was only in one way going out of verse, and was coming again into prose ten thousand strong—is notable both for these groupings and for other things. "Bounteous and liberal," "knowledge and acquaintance," "avarice and covetise"—these three pairs come in fourteen consecutive words. Very remarkable too, in this passage, is the abundance of rhetorical inversion, contrasted with the natural order sufficiently not to be irksome or a mere clumsy trick, but prevailing to an extent which evidently betokens a deliberate attempt to fix attention by a "strange device."

And these things, though not yet achieved in the best manner, are not merely achieved to some extent, but are achieved by means which are capable, in the right hands, of infinite multiplication and development. The doublets, triplets, and "foursomes" are often superfluous and sometimes absurd as they occur. But they present, in themselves, an infinite possibility of rhythmical adjustment and ornament, not least because of the tendency to group Romance with Teutonic equivalents, and so to get the advantage of the different rhythmical values and colours.

And this we shall, I think, find to be the real importance of fifteenth-century prose—rather than its production of a kind of miracle in Malory. If he had not been vouchsafed to us the loss would be immense in delight to a dozen generations (save some three or four who would not attend) of eager readers, and not a few writers would have lost a valuable pattern. But his less inspired immediate predecessors, contemporaries, and followers would have done the necessary pioneer-work for the Elizabethans, and handed on the necessary torch to them all the same. Without these elders, contemporaries, and

followers, Malory himself would have been powerless to provide the range of subject-treatment, the body of vocabulary and prose-stuff, or to make out the "plant" of a constantly growing language for the use of a constantly growing literature. Now this was necessary before great original kinds of various work could be done, and before a perfect command of mere expression and correct composition could superadd to itself the rhythmical grace of Hooker, much more the mighty fugues and fantasies of the great word-virtuosos from Raleigh and Greville and Donne to Milton and Taylor and Browne.

## INTERCHAPTER I

THE short summaries and few general remarks which have been set at the close of the three preceding chapters will hardly have dispensed us from a further survey backwards of the Interchapter kind. I believe these intermediate summings-up to be of the greatest possible value in all enquiries of a literary-historical nature, and they can nowhere be of more importance than in a history of this sort, which is almost entirely of the exploring and pioneer variety. I have, I believe, already said in the Preface, and shall take the liberty to repeat here (and elsewhere it may be), that the object of the book is less to arrive at definite conclusions—still less to lay down a cut-and-dried system—than to give a rationalised survey of the facts. In such a survey nothing can be of more importance than to halt from time to time, and see what the results, up to the point, have actually been.

Almost the whole of the country through which we have passed is, relatively and analogically at least, "the forest primæval." Absolutely it is of course not so, because composition in writing, and especially composition in prose, is almost necessarily artificial, that is to say imitative. In the case of a man like Ælfric, or even like the author of the *Blickling Homilies*, this artificial and indeed artistic imitation is very prominent, you can see it again in the *Ancren Riwle* and other Middle English examples. But except (and I suspect even in the case of) Ælfric himself, though men may have written with rhetorical treatises (in Latin, of course) before them, and may have studied to reproduce their Latin original as closely as possible, a deliberate conscious intention to get



prose effects out of English is almost impossible. It would require an evolution and stimulation of the critical sense which is antecedently improbable in the highest degree, and of which we find no trace actually before the time of Caxton—for Chaucer, though he had it as to verse, is not likely to have felt it as to prose. In reference, therefore, to the men of these seven or eight centuries before, say, 1450, the subject of enquiry, with perhaps one single exception, is not what they intended to do, but merely what they did. And, as has been already hinted, that single exception—Ælfric—is possibly no exception at all.

¶ It is scarcely rash to say that no poetry has ever been more essentially rhythmical than Anglo-Saxon. An average page of it looks by no means much unlike an average page of Greek choric verse<sup>1</sup>. But suppose a person taught (as Milton inhumanly taught his daughters) to read the two languages without himself understanding them, and further, in copies without line-division and with no knowledge of their prosody. I entertain no sort of doubt that, even with a good ear, he would be some time in finding out the rhythm of the Greek, whereas that of the Old English would strike him at once. It would be, in fact, only in certain cases that the Greek rhythm, beautiful as it always is, would strike him *at all*, till he had discovered the metre. In the English there is practically no metre to find out: rhythm must strike at once, and by itself, if it is ever to strike—and it does.

¶ Further, this rhythm, whatever refinements it may be possible to analyse out of or into it, is generally of the simplest possible character—a continuous trochaic roll which at the end of lines is practically omnipresent, either in its full constituted self, or in a long syllable which, with the natural pause, constitutes it<sup>2</sup>. Of these—and much

<sup>1</sup> Of course I am not referring to the blocks of anapæstic dimeter, or other things of the kind, but to the chorus proper, where only the strophic and antistrophic correspondence supplies the key.

<sup>2</sup> This sort of "prose catalexis," as it may be called, continues through our history, and the management of it, consciously or unconsciously, is one of the chief word-instruments of the prose artist.

more rarely of the dactylic ending, a piecing which has always continued to be the regular substitute for the trochee in English—the whole edge of the print, as you run your eye down page after page of Anglo-Saxon poetry, will be found to be composed, while the beginning and middle of the short lines is, if not exclusively composed of it, almost equally dominated by the same cadence

It was of course impossible that this domination should be equally pervading in prose, or there would practically have been no Anglo-Saxon prose at all. In the remarkable verse-prose of Ælfric it does appear to a very great extent, as we should expect. In writers who have no special thought of ornament, the closes are less invariably, but still generally, trochaic or *trochæoid*, and the necessarily much longer groups of words may seem to possess greater liberty. Yet even here, in the *Chronicle*, in Alfred's translations, in the *Apollonius*, where not, you will find but a small proportion of distinct iambic endings in sentences and sentence-members, though they do exist.

This peculiarity necessarily conditions, to a large extent, the whole rhythmical character of Anglo-Saxon prose composition. The trochee is a very peculiar foot. It may not have that all-pervading and all-conquering character of the iamb which Quintilian intimates in a famous phrase, but this is precisely because it has so strong a character of its own, and is practically incapable of disguising itself or of combining in inseparable fashions. This means, as a consequence, that compositions in which it is dominant, or largely prevalent, have a necessary lack of variety. Now variety, as may be unhesitatingly laid down after the same wise critic, is the great essential of prose rhythm.<sup>1</sup>

Not that the writer of "Old English" was absolutely *ascriptus glebae trocharcae*. From very early times, as we

<sup>1</sup> The levity and gesticulatory character which Aristotle (*v. sup.* p. 7 *note*) objected to in the foot do not appear in Old English, because of the singular gravity of the language. "Their heavy rider keeps them down." And it is not till the Middle English period that the invading iamb persuades the trochee to join it freely in producing combinations of larger feet.

have seen in the *Cyneheard* and *Cynewulf* story and the deed of gift to Worcester, he could manage a straightforward style with a certain amount of iambic or even pæonic rhythm in it, which was very far from ineffective. But when he took to "flights" the trochee recovered its ascendancy, with the consequences thereof. It has also been pointed out that this trochaic underhum was to a great extent a result of the character of the language itself. A language which is largely monosyllabic, and at the same time inflected, necessarily begets trochees ready-made in still larger quantities.

Until, therefore, a much greater infusion of Latin and Romance words, with the ultimate accentuation of the latter, had been admitted, and until inflexion began to drop off, a thoroughly flexible and variable prose word-book and phrase-book could hardly be achieved and it was not. Moreover, as has also been duly pointed out, the syntactical peculiarities of the language led to a certain monotony of sentence-arrangement and cadencing. The translations—as close as possible to the original in every one of these respects from vocabulary to word-order—which have been given above, will explain what has been here said better than much expatiation of comment, and will show how it is that Anglo-Saxon—by no means "poor" in any fair sense of the word, and not even justly to be called illiterate—scarcely admitted of the greater forms of prose. It had already mastered that simple, straightforward faculty of narration and exposition—even, to a certain extent, of argument—which in later centuries, when the word-stuff had been reinforced and polished, Latimer and Bunyan and Defoe and Cobbett were to employ so admirably. But when it was simple it was apt to be rather too simple, and when it aspired to greatness it was almost certain to slip into a sort of prose-poetry which approached too near in form to poetry itself, and to poetry of a somewhat rudimentary and monotonous kind.

If, however, by some impossibility, Ælfric had been able to attain ornate rhythm like Sir Thomas Browne's,

and the *Chronicle* men, or the author of *Apollonius*, a pedestrian harmony like Southey's, the upper structure of the work of both must have been all to do again when the change from Anglo-Saxon to Middle English took place. I say the *upper* structure, because the architects of the oldest English undoubtedly provided a foundation, and something more than a foundation, which has not been much, if at all, disturbed or added to. But the twin influences of the revolution—the infusion of Latin or Romance words with their different terminations and balances, and the gradual disuse of inflexion—could not but alter the main, if not the whole, conditions of prose building, and especially of prose rhythmical arrangement. It is no wonder if for some three centuries we find the bricks half-moulded and half-baked, the mortar daubed without the slightest attention to temper in its making or to artistic effect in its application, the courses out of level, and the bonds irregular. Besides, there is the special effect of translation. A very large proportion of Anglo-Saxon had, no doubt, been translated likewise, but the translators had been good or fair masters of their own tongue as far as it went, and had taken not a few liberties in adding and altering. In all probability the whole of the earlier Middle English prose is translation pure and simple, executed by men who are, for the most part, making their very imperfect dialect as they go along, who do not seem to possess much original talent, and who have a hampering and deadening uniformity of subject to deal with. The famous passage describing the cruelties of the reign of Stephen shows what Old English could do almost at its last gasp, the *Ancient Rime*, probably not fifty years younger, and a distinctly favourable specimen of the newer form, shows what that form had to content itself with.

We have been able to take some interesting examples from it, but they all betray, and necessarily so, a haphazard character—now French, now Latin, now Biblical. (And it cannot be too often repeated that, until Middle English was far on its way, French, so powerful and so

liberal in verse-patterns, had little or nothing to give us as guiding stuff in prose, while, when things improved, the admirable prose of Villehardouin and Joinville unluckily coincided with a long interval during which English history, and nearly all English prose not sacred, was written in Latin. If only Walter Mapes or William of Malmesbury had used English as a vehicle<sup>1</sup>. But the thing was probably impossible.

It is equally impossible to say how long this state of things might have gone on, if it had not been for the great change in conversation and education indicated in the famous passage of Trevisa<sup>1</sup>. As long as people learnt Latin through French, and made no use of English in school at all, they could not think of writing their native language in a scholarly fashion. As soon as they exchanged the foreign language for the native as a vehicle and instrument of construing, etc., a definite attempt to transfer something of the literary quality of French or Latin into English rapidly became, in successive stages, possible, probable, and certain. The almost indispensable feeling of definite *emulation* does not seem to have arisen till Caxton, and, as has been said above, we must not allow too much even for mere unconscious copying in the first tolerably accomplished school of prose—that which shows itself towards the close of the fourteenth century. But some influence of the kind must have been exerted, in whatever degree and measure, upon Wyclif and Trevisa, upon Chaucer and Mandeville.

The illustrations of rhythmical progress which the work of these four gives are differentiated somewhat remarkably. Trevisa supplies least, as falling most into line with his predecessors, and rendering Higden "some-how nohow," as the old popular phrase goes, yet with a certain modernity as compared with earlier work. For us his matter alone is eloquent. With Wyclif, and the tracts influenced by him, and the versions of the Bible issued by him and by his followers, things become decidedly different. An influence which has been sporadically

<sup>1</sup> *V sup* p 57

manifest for centuries, that of the Vulgate, now concentrates itself and becomes constant. Something of the all-powerful Hebrew parallelism, which of itself creates rhythmical quality, establishes itself in English. In the tracts and sermons there is another cause at work—less beautiful in its results perhaps, but hardly less powerful. Wyclif himself is a scholastic of almost the first rank, and most of his *grew* are at least technically masters of the same craft. Now, logical arrangement of thought, though it has sometimes failed to be rhythmical, lends itself with remarkable ease to rhythmical arrangement. The barest syllogism has a certain rhythm, and when that syllogism is clothed and extended rhetorically, it is the fault of the writer if he does not develop the rhythm likewise. Wyclif and those about him are not very highly developed in this respect, but they are seldom merely amorphous.

The infinitely greater literary *ethos* of Chaucer necessitated a stronger and more various display of prose manner in him. We have duly noticed those singular out-croppings of blank verse in the *Tale of Melibee*, which are not quite like anything else in literature. They show, on the one hand, how, though blank decasyllables did not yet, or for long afterwards, exist in English verse, the practice of decasyllable in rhymed couplet or stanza-form had subdued the poet to itself, how, on the other, he was evidently trying to impress some comeliness of form on prose, and how, on the third (for three hands are as useful in argument as they would be physically), English was gravitating towards a strongly iambic mould. To me at any rate, if not to others, the elegiac couplet at the opening of the *Boethius* tells the same story, though I do not believe that Chaucer intended to write it. In the versions of the *metra* he came, as it seems to me again, to the highest level of English prose yet attained, and one not so very far below anything reached since, except a few topless flights of the greatest seventeenth and nineteenth century masters. And it is very noticeable that here he is not betrayed into any improper echoing

of the originals. In the greater part of *Melibee* and almost the whole of the *Parson's Tale*, except the remarkable *coda-palinode*, he is more like his predecessors, and therefore more formless. But the "blank" tendency reappears, with not a little less questionable rhythmification, in this *coda*. And the treatise on the *Astrolabe*, debarred by its subject from any flights, is a very remarkable testimony to the progress which English was making, so as to gain or regain a style-rhythm of all work, clear, not inharmonious, but not in the least ambitious or intricate.

I do not know whether anybody, in discussing the vexed question of the original language of Mandeville, has attempted tests of cadence, but I doubt whether much benefit could be derived from them. As any one who has ever tried translation, on more than the smallest scale, and in more than the most schoolboy fashion, must know for himself in his own case—as the painful reviewer of the baser sort of translators knows in the case of others,—it is possible only by an enormous *tour de force*, and then only now and then for a short time, to keep the order even, let alone the rhythm, of French in English with any good effect, while the badness of the effect in cases of mere inadequacy is quite too shocking. To make good English out of good French you have not only to paraphrase rather than to construe, but you have to break up and remake the sentences, alter the balance of the clauses—"transpose," in short, in almost every possible way. The chief resemblance to early French prose, as, for instance, in Villehardouin, and still more in his continuator Henri de Valenciennes, is the already-mentioned evidence of short sentences beginning with "And"—"*Et*," a habit most undoubtedly derived from the similar one in the *laisses* or tirades of the *chansons de geste*. On the other hand, it is interesting to compare the *Voyage and Travel* with its four-hundred-year elder *Apollonius of Tyre*. Between them we shall find hardly any third example of clear straightforward narrative comparable to these two, and between the two themselves there is no want of resemblance, and no want

of effectiveness either. But it is the effectiveness, carried a little farther, of a story told by a child (I do not say *to* a child), and is almost entirely devoid of artifice, though the wonderful beauty of some of the legends themselves requires none, and gives the impression of a great deal.

In the fifteenth century—with its nibble at the sixteenth as defined above—the interest for us concentrates itself upon Malory in the first place, and upon Berners and Fisher in the second, though the curious attempts of Pecock supply us with something, and though an excursus of interest in the contributory way may, and presently shall, be got out of the earlier “aureators,” or employers of pedantic and high-flown language, none of whom can be said to have much, if any, command of co-ordinated rhythm, but who hit—all unknowing—upon a mighty instrument thereof which was to be worked long afterwards to perfection by Sir Thomas Browne. Nor should we fail to repeat that in the widening of subject which men like Capgrave and Fortescue provide, and in the insistent practice of translation, not only matter but also method was unconsciously accumulating. Still, the three are the three

It has been already suggested that Malory, the most interesting by far as literature, is not, historically, in the most direct line of rhythmical development. He was undoubtedly much read, Ascham would hardly have taken the trouble to write himself down an honest ass in respect of the book, if he had not been so, and the greater Elizabethan literature is full of traces of his influence in spirit. But of that influence in form we shall not, I think, discover very much if we go seriously to work. In the first place, his is an outbreak of genius more than a development of study, and, in the second, it is very much more a summing-up of what was possible, with the means already known and used, than a construction and application of freshly invented plant to newly gathered material.

Berners, with far less genius, has something of the same kind, but he adds to it something else which, in its turn, with less genius still but in greater concentration and in higher development, constitutes the whole attraction



and qualification, for us, of Fisher. These men have felt like Malory's publisher, what it was perhaps impossible for Malory to feel, what he most certainly and fortunately did not feel as a fact—dissatisfaction with their medium of expression, admiration of others, determination if possible to make English those others' equal. There may have been, as some think, actual revived and increased teaching of Rhetoric in the ordinary scholastic course, there may have been, in Fisher's case especially, a beginning of resort to its classical exponents, there was certainly practice of version from French and Latin, and latterly from Spanish and Greek and even Hebrew. And these things supply the devices noted above, and result in the practice exemplified in our specimens. It is often awkward and "scholastic" in the unfavourable sense, sometimes almost puerile, with its confidence in repetition, inversion, and the like. But it prepares the way, as the far more beautiful and intrinsically precious style of Malory never could do, for the developments and achievements of the future in rhythm as in other points.

This Interchapter would, however, as has been hinted, be incomplete without a few more words on a subject already touched in it, but not much exemplified in the specimens previously given—the great development of vocabulary in the course of the fifteenth century, and in particular the growth of "aureation," or the use of splendid (as it were *gilded*) words for those words' sake.

The actual enlargement of the dictionary was, of course, a consequence, partly of advancing civilisation as it is called, partly of the much wider range of literature, even translated literature, in respect of themes and subjects. The first important English dictionaries, the *Promptorium Parvulorum*<sup>1</sup> (1440) and the *Catholicon Anglicum*<sup>2</sup> (forty years later), date from this century, and already have very respectable word-lists, not poor in terms of Romance and Latin origin. But about the date

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Way, Camden Society, 3 vols (1843-65), vol. iii very difficult to get. Ed. Mayhew, EETS (1908).

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Herbage and Wheatley, EETS (1881). Both this and the *Promptorium* are of course English *Latin*.

of the latter book a process, which was going on in all countries more or less,<sup>1</sup> brought on—uncritically and excessively perhaps, but with valuable results for all that—a great accession of elaborate terms of Latin origin. In order not to burden the book and the reader with unnecessary displays of learning, I may refer to one volume only—a specially suitable one for the purpose—Dr Ingram's collection<sup>2</sup> of early translations of the *Imitatio Christi*. The work of A Kempis, from its own remarkable rhythmical character, could hardly fail to influence its translators. But it is the language of the translations to which I wish to draw attention.

The first or "Old" version which Dr Ingram printed may date from the middle of the century<sup>3</sup>. Two others, printed in 1504 and perhaps written a good deal earlier, are by "Lady Margaret's" chaplain, Atkinson, and Lady Margaret herself. Now in all these versions there appear examples of the heavily and directly Latinised vocabulary, which contrasts in Pecock with his curious "Saxonisings," and which in other fifteenth-century writers appears without them. Dr Ingram protested against these as "unlike to genuine English." But let us see. The list contains words like "claustral," "confabulation," "fecundity," "intellection," "longanimity," "taciturnity," "vilipend," every one of which is genuine English to-day. It contains others, like the verb "abject" (why not, if "*project*" and "*interject*"?), "circumfound" (why not, if "*confound*"?), and many more, which have failed to survive by mere accident, and some of which any writer would be not ill-advised to revive.

But, dropping these daggers, let us observe the surely unquestionable advantage, for rhythmical purposes, of these words as synonyms, and as fresh-comers altogether. How

<sup>1</sup> It is noticeable in English and still more in Scottish poetry, and most noticeable of all in the poetry and prose of the French *grands rhétoriciens*, as they were called by their countryman and contemporary, Coquillart. The *lingua pedantesca* of Italian is half an exaggeration, half a burlesque, of the same tendency.

<sup>2</sup> E. L. T. S. (1893).

<sup>3</sup> An attribution of the Cambridge University Library Catalogue "about 1400" must be wrong, for all manner of reasons.

any one can be otherwise than glad at the introduction of so fine a word as "claustral," or so useful an appellation for a too rare thing as "taciturnity," I cannot understand. Also, whether the fifteenth-century "aureators" and Browne and Johnson and others were all wrong, and the stock condemnation of their practice (which Dr Ingram took from the poet Campbell directly, but which is a commonplace) is all right, or *vice versa*, one thing must be clear. For good or for evil, and for a good or an evil which must depend very mainly, if not wholly, on the skill of the artist, the introduction of such words must alter the character, and increase the possibilities, of prose rhythm to an immense extent. Here—as far as the mere individual word-values are concerned—are reinforcements of anapæst, amphibrach, pæon, and even dochmiac added to the simple monosyllables, iambs, trochees, and dactyls of earlier English, here, much more also, are materials for the construction, out of more words than one, of endless combinations of feet. That some of them will be rejected or disused does not in the least matter, for, as has been shown, others of exactly the same rhythmical character and value will remain, and will for ever serve as examples for fresh coinage.

With this and the other new contingents to the language, and with the commencement of definite rhetorical study and practice, little but the application of individual genius to the work was now needed. One particular influence of pattern, that of the new versions of the Bible, which in importance had never been approached before, and has never been equalled since, was to be added immediately, was indeed in actual operation before the death of Fisher. But this we shall barely touch in the next chapter—for reasons. In the present critical summary, however, and in the three chapters of positive analysis on which it is based, we have given what seemed necessary as to the history of our subject before the "Elizabethan" period, in that larger extension of the term which includes the newer-fangled writers of the later years of Elizabeth's father

## CHAPTER V

### THE FIRST MATURITY—ASCHAM TO HOOKER

Shorter retrospect—Continuance of rhetorical influence the Cambridge School—Cheke his "bankruptcy" theory—Its fallacy—Wilson and "ink horn terms"—The excuses—Ascham—Tynedale—The Prayer Book (Cranmer?)—Latimer—Profane translations—Lyly and Euphuism its failure in rhythm—Hooker his achievement—Rhythm sweep—And fingering of particular words—Sidney

IN the preceding chapters and Interchapter we have seen how prose style generally, and prose rhythm in particular, slowly and gradually arrived at the possession of its means and the comprehension of its objects, through the stages of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English. In the older language we saw that it did what it could, and that it could even do not a little, but was hampered by many things—by the somewhat amorphous character of Anglo-Saxon *verse*, into which prose slipped too easily, by certain peculiarities and limitations of vocabulary, by the too-pervadingly trochaic rhythm of the language, which prevented it from availing itself of the staccato and more varied combinations—the four-syllabled and five-syllabled feet—of perfect prose, and, lastly, by the comparatively small range of subject, which hardly invited great variation of tone. And we saw, further, how in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries Middle English—forming itself by the, at first, slow but ever-increasing reinforcement and incorporation of Romance words into the destined blend—gradually freed itself

from all its limitations, gained multiplicity and variety of expression, gained also multiplicity and variety of vocabulary, possessed itself of the materials of pæonic and dochmiac rhythm, and, lastly, in at least the three cases of Caxton, Fisher, and Berners, set itself to work to achieve definite *rhetoric*—to see whether the “fair language of French” and the stately language of Latin could not find, in English, something not so ill corresponding to them<sup>1</sup>

In reviewing these periods and their work we found that, in the first and older, there was not a little remarkable achievement in passage, though less in phrase, but that it could not produce a great work of prose, nor even, despite Ælfric, a great and assured master of prose. We found that the second, towards its end, in the *Morte d'Arthur* and in Malory, did produce both the one and the other. But we saw also that this was a sort of windfall—of the Ages as well as of the Muses—the half miraculous swan-song of a dying period of history and a dying state of literature, for which one man had, as it were, been chosen and called to be the special exponent, and which nobody but William Morris, and he by a sort of white magic, was ever really to recover. Lastly, we saw in Berners—who at other times has something of Malory's charm, though less of his genius—no longer the dying swan of the past, but the ugly duckling which is to be the living swan of the future, which now swatters and swashes and swaps in ungainly gymnastics of rhetoric—such rhetoric as Leonard Coxe is about more formally to introduce to English, and Thomas Wilson to take up later.

As before, however, and in constantly increasing measure, it is the wash and counterwash of different eddies and tides of influence that polishes and forms the ceaselessly vexed pebbles of style. There is, in the first place, this definitely technical or rhetorical element,

<sup>1</sup> I must apologise to any one who sees mere repetition of the Interchapter in this and the next paragraph, but it seemed to me that, in a matter so little trite, a summary of the summary might not be superfluous or impertinent.

which, as we shall see, shapes itself with a curious twist in the so-called "Cambridge School"—Ascham, Wilson, and their friend and slightly elder, Cheke. There is the continuing and ever-increasing importance of the successive translations of the Bible, starting with a distinct contribution of personal and individual genius in Tyndale, and winding up with an unequalled example of combined energy and skill in the Authorised Version<sup>1</sup>. There is a mass of other translation from French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch—all affecting the general complexion of the literature, and to no small extent, though to the wrath of the Cambridge men, directly enriching the vocabulary. There is the immense multiplication of subject—of which a sort of exhibition in little may be found in the curious literature of the so-called Pamphlet. In particular, under this head, there is the growth of fiction—the *novella* at first rather than the novel or the full romance,<sup>2</sup> but still fiction. And finally, there is the presence, at last, of an astonishingly large number of men of distinct and individual genius, and (which is perhaps more really astonishing) of a multitude of men of more than ordinary talent, who all, consciously or unconsciously, put their hands to the work.

The position of the three Cambridge scholars mentioned above is a curious one, and though in part founded on a fallacy, it was not unfortunate for English. The conception of it was probably due to Cheke, who, though he wrote little or nothing original, was a man of distinctly original genius, if one with the, in genius, not infrequent touch of the "crank". Among the "sports" of his wit he bestowed on England the inestimable blessing of teaching her, to pronounce Greek so as to bring out the beauty of

<sup>1</sup> This latter lying beyond the strict period of this chapter, the whole subject (except in so far as Tyndale, Coverdale partly, and Cranmer are concerned) will be postponed to the next.

<sup>2</sup> The full grown romance does continue, and at length, after the *Amadis* translations of Anthony Munday and others, passes into the rather more original work of Emanuel Ford—*Parismus* and *Parismenus* and the rest. But, except in the remarkable exceptions of the *Ariadna* and *Euphues*, each to be the subject of separate and substantive notice, it has little or nothing to do with style or rhythm.

Greek poetry to an English ear<sup>1</sup> This wisdom, however, was no doubt connected with his main and favourite folly of "keeping our tongue undefiled"—not in the Chaucerian way at all, but by a process exactly the reverse of Chaucer's—by refusing admission to all foreign elements, and actually expelling those that existed I am not so exhaustively acquainted with his works—which, though not individually important, are numerous and not easy of access—as to know whether he ever refers to Pecock, a writer who, as we saw, was much taken up, from the point of matter, by the extreme reformers But his principles, and his practice in his translation of the Gospel of St Matthew, are much in line with "about-writing" and "before-bar" The principle itself is roundly stated in his rather well-known Letter to Sir Thomas Hoby "I am of opinion that our own tongue should be written clean and pure, unmixed and unmangled with borrowing from other tongues, wherein, if we take not heed by time, ever borrowing and never paying, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt"

The Elizabethans loved parables, and knew the Scriptures, so that one might have aptly asked Sir John Cheke whether, after the process of borrowing jewels of silver and jewels of gold from the Egyptians, Israel was in much danger of bankruptcy Yet perhaps even this is not a strong enough demurrer by analogy, for, if the Red Sea had not closed the account, there might have been some danger of resumption there But what possible "paying back" can there be in such a case as this? The language borrowed from is none the poorer, the language borrowing is at once, and (if the word suits and lives) permanently, the richer The lender does not want his loan back with or without usury, for he loses nothing, the borrower neither need nor, if he would, could restore it—though he may not improbably give something in exchange These foreign borrowings were, in fact, the

<sup>1</sup> It, of course, may be a mere coincidence that *literary* appreciation of this poetry, as distinguished from mere philology, has been keener, more constant, and more widely spread in England than in any other country But if there is no causal connection, it is odd

food of the older English tongue itself, causing it to live and grow and flourish. It may, perhaps, now and then have taken a surfeit of them, but in that case nature will provide just as it does in other cases, and the superfluity will be got rid of by disuse. One might ask Sir John, again, how about the borrowed debauchery of "opinion" and "bankrupt," and why he did not pay back this gold of Achan at once and stick to "deeming" (he has the verb elsewhere) and "bench-breaking"?

So, too, the second of the group, Thomas or Sir Thomas Wilson, undoubtedly indulges too far in his denunciation<sup>1</sup> of "ink-horn terms" (a fashionable phrase of the time, obviously enough metaphored), by which he does not so much mean Latinisms as technicalities, foreign words generally, archaisms, and, in fact, all Aristotle's *ξένα* as opposed to his *κύρια*. Once more, the demurrer has to be put, "If you are going to reject all these, how are you to enrich your vocabulary? How are you to avoid the fatal 'stationary state'?" Before Wilson's death there was born a certain William Shakespeare, not the least of whose weapons of supremacy was the absolute equanimity, and the unfailing resource, with which he borrowed, made, revived, anticipated new and old vocabulary, using technicalities in such a fashion that innocent folk think he must have been of the various crafts, coining words like "unwedged," the parallels to which at this day make prudish critics gasp and gibber, borrowing, like the very spendthrifts of his fellow-dramatists, and spending the benevolences he levies without stint of degree, or reck of consequence.

And yet, once more, there is the excuse for Wilson that excess in any one direction of this kind of xenomania is undoubtedly dangerous and offensive, that excess in all kinds of it would be positively loathsome if only (to keep precisely to our special sheep) that the rhythm resulting would be too composite and not enough symphonic.

<sup>1</sup> *Art of Rhetoric*, Bk. iii. "Sir" Thomas by the custom and courtesy of literary history. The *DNB* unknights him.



For it would be alike uncritical, unhistorical, and The unjust to neglect the fact that there was, at the time especially, considerable excuse for this touchiness or touch-me-not-ishness on the part of scholars, jealous of the honour and welfare of English. The fifteenth century was not long past, and the fifteenth century (with the earlier sixteenth following it in its doubtful course) had, as has been said, been the time of what are called in French literary history the *grands rhétoriciens*—of what is called in English literary history “aureate diction.” This had to be brought within reasonable limits. It was not desirable that English should follow the French patterns of Chastellain and Robertet to the hardly caricatured jargon which (on suggestion from Geoffroy Tory) Rabelais has preserved for the laughter and delectation of eternity in the mouth of the Limousin scholar. It was not desirable that people should be encouraged to write lines, in verse, like

Mirror of fructuous intendment,

and abuse, in prose, terminology like that of the early Englishings of the *Imitation*. It was specially undesirable from our own special point of view, for over-Latinising would have destroyed the composite rhythm which was being elaborated, and have substituted a dull copying of the single rhythm of Latin itself. In so far as the protests of Cheke and his comrades were prompted, consciously or unconsciously, by the fear of this, they were perfectly right, but, as usual, they were enlarged and exaggerated into generalisations, which were all but perfectly wrong.

Both Cheke and Wilson justified their censures by their practices, though neither was a very great writer of English. And to see what the school could do, but in the matter not of mere criticism but of positive craftsmanship, one had better turn to their fellow, good Roger Ascham, of whom wise judges of literature will not think the worse because he, forgetting literature itself for the while, uttered that blasphemy against the *Morte d'Arthur*

which has been referred to above. The gods had not made Ascham romantic, and they had made him of not very subtle wit, but a proper moral man, a Protestant (though with a certain further protestantism as to the value of his own skin), and a typical Renaissance scholar of the less precious kind, with a thoroughly *unscholarly* contempt for the Middle Ages. So that he simply knew not what he did or said when he spoke against Malory. On the other hand, he knew very well what he said and did when he wrote that "English matter" the *Toxophilus* "in the English tongue for Englishmen," and the sentence more than sets off the other as far as his literary balance-sheet is concerned.

That Ascham's style, however simple-looking, is, as usual, "not so simple as it looks" is sufficiently shown by the very different general notions which have been held respecting it and its place in the family-tree of English prose style generally—some making room for it in the ancestry of Lyly, some in that of Hooker. As is usual, again, both views are possible and arguable, but to the present writer the Hooker lineage seems by far the clearest and most certain. If you take Fisher before, Hooker after, and Latimer as a trace-horse running with a very loose rein at the side, using also his own, Cheke's, and Wilson's observations to help your vision, the origin and the object of Ascham's writing will soon become clear. To begin with, he is under the ostensibly, but by no means really, or at least wholly, contradictory influences of the rhetorical system—that of employing the traditional technical methods of accomplishing and heightening prose—and the principle of being unflinchingly "English." The mother-tongue may learn how to spend her money, but she must not borrow, she may make new furniture out of her own wood, cook the products of her fields and farms and fish-ponds in new ways, but not import outlandish goods or foreign delicacies. Thus you will find in Ascham curious and (one is bound to say) rather artificial rhetorical arrangements, like the parallel contortions (to get homœoteleuton) of the passage about the

causes of not shooting,<sup>1</sup> and a practically universal aiming at balance, but, side by side with these, you will find an abundance, and almost a superabundance, of the intensest English ornament of all — alliteration. The combined rhythm that results may be estimated from the following passages

It is your shame (I speak to you all, you young gentlemen of England) that one maid should go beyond you all in excellency of learning and knowledge of divers tongues. Point forth six of the best given gentlemen of this court, and all they together show not so much good will, spend not so much time, bestow not so many hours daily, orderly, and constantly, for the increase of learning and knowledge, as doth the Queen's Majesty herself. Yea, I believe, that beside her perfect readiness in Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish, she readeth here now at Windsor more Greek every day, than some prebendary of this church doth read Latin in a whole week. And that which is most praiseworthy of all, within the walls of her privy chamber, she hath obtained that excellency of learning to understand, speak, and write both wittily with head, and fair with hand, as scarce one or two rare wits in both the universities have in many years reached unto. Amongst all the benefits that God hath blessed me withal, next the knowledge of Christ's true religion, I count this the greatest, that it pleased God to call me to be one poor minister in setting forward these excellent gifts of learning in this most excellent prince, whose only example if the rest of our nobility would follow, then might England be for learning and wisdom in nobility, a spectacle to all the world beside. But see the mishap of men, the best examples have never such force to move to any goodness, as the bad, vain, light, and fond have to all illness.

There is not much alliteration here, though a paragraph lower down will show both it and the Fisherian doublets. The actual passage above (which, no doubt Ascham polished as best he could, to make the flattery of the substance more agreeable to its subject) is, if any one will examine it, singularly well arranged as to accumulation of short with long sentences (Ascham elsewhere sometimes rather abuses short ones). And in individual instances the cadence, though far from elaborate, is very well-sufficing. It opens with a fourth pæon, "It is your

<sup>1</sup> "Young children use not, young men dare not, sage men will not, aged men cannot," and so for a dozen clauses more (*Toxophilus*, ed. Arber, p. 48.)

shame", and though for the most part it requires none but dissyllabic or trisyllabic feet to scan it, there are a fair number of pæonic sprinklings throughout

Although, therefore, Ascham's rhythm is not, as a rule, very elaborate or delightful, and though both the alliteration and some of the classical tricks are occasionally overdone, it must be pretty obvious that there is here, first, the foundation, and not a little of the actual structure, of a general style with good working and fair ornamental qualities, secondly, the possibility of much further development in both directions. There is already balance—the first great instrument of rhythm, and there is, in the longer sentences, an approach to that *undulation*—that substitution of a curve made of minor and contrasted curves for sharp "roof-of-the-house" ascent and descent—which in no very long time Hooker was to master. For much in the *Schoolmaster* Ascham deserves well, in almost the highest degree, of English scholarship, especially for his prescription of translation and retranslation from and into Latin—undoubtedly the surest (if not the only) way to master English writing<sup>1</sup>. But in himself, and as an example, he deserves even more. I always have thought, and always shall think, that the titles of "Father of this," "Father of that," in literature, are delusive and rather puerile. But if they are to be admitted, I should certainly assign that of "Father of English Prose" rather to Ascham than to Wyclif,<sup>2</sup> in regard to whom it is very nearly absurd, or to More, who (some people really seem to forget it) wrote the *Utopia* in Latin, and did not in anything else (for the *Richard III* has been wildly over-praised, and the *Pamphlets* are mostly abuse or

<sup>1</sup> The late Mr Charles Neate, who was not only an economist and politician, but an excellent scholar in both ancient and modern languages, was once examining the upper forms of one of the larger Tudor grammar schools. He commented on the goodness of the English in the papers, and asked if the subject was regularly taught. The headmaster told him that it was not, but that he and his senior classical assistant were very particular about translation. "I thought so," said Neate, "and there's no way like it."

<sup>2</sup> As to Chaucer, see above, p 75. But you *can* "have many fathers" in this sense, and Chaucer is father in a stage further back, while Wyclif is hardly so in any.

technical logomachy) do much of real importance in English

For one of More's pamphlet-opponents, however, and for the first of Wyclif's successors, a very great position, if not exactly as an original writer, has sometimes been claimed

I have, I think, seen it stated somewhere that William Tyndale founded the rhythm and cadence of the English Bible. This is a great claim, and it has to be examined. To some extent it must be admitted offhand, for Tyndale's versions of the New Testament and of the Pentateuch were the first in English<sup>1</sup> since Wyclif's (with which they have very little in common), while with the later versions (comparison of all of the most important of which, save the "Bishops'" of 1568, is facilitated by Bagster's *English Hexapla*) his connections are very close indeed. Let us take as an instance a short but fine and well-known passage—Rom xiii 11, 12<sup>2</sup>

Here there is no evidence that Tyndale had as much as seen Wyclif, while it is perfectly obvious that all his four successors have seen Tyndale. The Vulgate has given Wyclif "*praecessit*" for *προέκοψεν*, and he takes it rather literally and uninspiredly. Tyndale, with the Greek before him, tries (for him rather lamely) "is passed," and

<sup>1</sup> I put aside, as derivative and not capital in literature, the otherwise interesting Scots version of Purvey by Nisbet (S T S, 3 vols 1901 5)

<sup>2</sup> *Wyc* (spelling only modernised, missing suffixes bracketed, and obsolete words or parts of words italicised). For now our health is near[er] than when we believed. The night went before, but the day hath nighed, therefore cast we awy the works of darkness, and be we clothed with the armours of light.

*Tyn*. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is passed, and the day is come nigh. Let us therefore cast away the deeds of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

*Cranmer* (?) (the "Great"). For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is past, the day is come nigh. Let us therefore cast away the deeds of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

*Geneva*. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed it. The night is passed, and the day hath come to us. let us therefore cast away the deeds of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

*Rheims*. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and do on the armour of light.

*A V*. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

though there is an evident discrepancy between this and the next words, the Englishmen who got the "Great" Bible almost literally out of the fire at Paris, and the hot gospellers of Geneva, and the reactionaries of Rheims obediently take it from him. It is true that the Authorised Version, with that extraordinary inspiration which belongs to it, arrives at the huge improvement both in sense and sound of "is far spent," but the rest of the passage is still Tyndalian.

More remarkable still is the beginning of the next chapter<sup>1</sup>. Wyclif has a very weak and clumsy rendering,<sup>2</sup> not worthy of the Vulgate<sup>3</sup>. But Tyndale sees at once the advantage given by the opening Greek *pionoun*, and grasps it. "Him that is weak in the faith receive unto you." Coverdale has the sense to keep it exactly, and the Great Bible (which is largely Coverdale) *ditto*. Geneva restores "take" for "receive," and Rheims, putting in an unnecessary "*And him,*" which the Vulgate does not authorise and the Greek only permits, omits "the" before "faith." The Authorised Version, reverting wisely, for it makes better rhythm, to "receive," omits "unto," which, considering the "re" of "receive," seems unnecessary. The whole "cast" in all five and in the "Bishops'" is Tyndale's. Nor is it in mere word-for-word selection that there is this discipleship. I have no ecstatic affection for the "B. Reformation" and its martyrs, and I began this detailed enquiry certainly with no prejudice in favour of Tyndale. His original work, though my friend Professor Ker may be right in pleading that it is a little less foul-mouthed than the ordinary Billingsgate of the pious rebels and their equally pious and equally foul-mouthed adversaries, has no very special quality. It is rather like Fisher—displaying a certain rudimentary rhetoric learnt from Latin, with many groups of synonyms and so forth. But as a translator he certainly caught and rendered the rhythm of Hebrew and of the "common" Greek in a most remarkable

<sup>1</sup> τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε

<sup>2</sup> "But take ye a sick man in belief"

<sup>3</sup> "Infirmum autem in fidem assumite"

fashion, and in both cases (for it is scarcely necessary now to rebut the silly and unscholarly depreciation of the latter dialect as "bad" Greek) he administered a sovereign cordial to English

Of Tyndale's colleague, successor, and (as one may call it) literary executor, Coverdale, and of their followers in the work of translating the Bible until the Authorised Version, it will probably be better not to speak till we come to that Version itself, at the beginning of the next chapter. But something should be added here on the almost equally remarkable accomplishment and example given to English prose rhythm by the slightly younger Book of Common Prayer. The version of the Psalms therein included has been preferred by some to that in King James's book, but this is a fallacy, partly one of affection, from the familiarity of this beautiful composition in all states and conditions of life, and partly one of want of distinction. The Prayer-Book version *is* better for "singing or saying"—its original purpose,<sup>1</sup> it is *not* better to read. But when we think of the Prayer-Book as a model of style and a treasury of rhythm, we usually and rightly think of its Collects, Prayers, and other similar exercises. That the matter of these is to a large extent taken from Missal and Breviary is, of course, a matter equally of course, but, as I have so frequently pointed out, even literal translations require genius in the translator to carry with them any of the formal beauties of style—especially of rhythm—and these are sometimes very far from literal translations, or indeed translations at all. Their singular and almost inimitable beauty<sup>2</sup> has been admitted by all competent judges, and by some

<sup>1</sup> Its extraordinary beauty for these purposes is well known. "The rivers | of the flood thereof | shall make glad | the city | of God" is one of a dozen examples which simply offer themselves in the Psalms for the day on which I write this note.

<sup>2</sup> I believe the late Bishop Dowden of Edinburgh, who was no mean hand at such things himself, and was one of the most widely read liturgical scholars in the kingdom, used to say that nobody had ever quite caught the tone except Miss Christina Rossetti, in *Time Flies* and *The Face of the Deep*. I certainly had always thought so myself, and indeed may have to some extent put my own words into his mouth.

entirely impartial ones. There has been a tendency to assign the authorship—as far as such a thing can be assigned to one man—to Cranmer. Some special points alleged, such as the combination of “Saxon” and Latin words, are, as we have seen, generations older, and were used by almost all serious prose writers of the time. Nor do I, in such original work of the Archbishop’s as I have read, see anything very distinctly pointing to this achievement. The Preface of the “Great” Bible of 1540 is certainly very good, and an example from it might be given, but, except in a certain “quietism” of style which is rather suggestive of Hooker than of the Bible, its rhythm does not remind me much of the Collects. Of course the shortness of these documents as wholes invites, and in fact compels, brevity of clause and sentence (Cranmer’s own work is rather inclined to long sentences), and, to any good craftsman, must suggest an adroit use of balance. But brevity has the Scylla and the Charybdis of obscurity and of baldness ever waiting for it, and balance those of monotonous clock-beat and tedious parallelism. The ship is safe through all these in such things as the exquisite symmetry of the Absolution (which might be strengthened in substance, but could hardly be bettered in form) at the very opening, as the quiet dismissal to repose of the Prayer of St Chrysostom,<sup>1</sup> as the incomparable sentences of the Burial Service, or as such triumphs of symphony in miniature as the Collects

<sup>1</sup> This very remarkable piece, which, I believe, was taken straight from the Greek, not only allows itself to be scanned with unusual confidence, but makes it, in a still more unusual manner, possible to observe some method in the music

Almighty | God, | who hast given | us grace | at this time | with one |  
accord | to make | our common | supplications | unto thee, | and dost promise |  
that when two | or three | are gathered | together | in thy Name | thou wilt  
grant | their requests | Fulfil now, | O Lord, | the desires | and petitions |  
of thy servants | as may be most | expedient | for them, | granting us | in  
this world | knowledge | of thy truth, | and in the world | to come | life |  
everlasting



for the First Sunday in Advent, for Palm Sunday, and Trinity Sunday, and as (greatest in subject, not least in power), the Prayer of Consecration in the Eucharist

Very few readers or hearers of this last, unless actually informed of the fact, would think or believe that while the first part is, if not entirely original, a cento of new and old, the later part—the actual consecration—is almost word for word from the *Canon Missae*, with a few unimportant omissions, such as that (doctrinally unimportant, but not so æsthetically) of feebly rhetorical amplifications, like *in sanctas et venerabiles manus suas* after *accepit*, and *praeclarum* before *calicem*. The whole is to the ear like a seamless coat to the eye, and though I must, for obvious reasons, decline to quote and scan it here, I believe the actual music of its rhythm must have communicated itself to millions of fit ears, whenever they were allowed to hear it

One famous figure of the Reformation, who is also one of the most remarkable of English writers at this or any time—a writer who, with Bunyan, Defoe, and Cobbett, composes a class, and something like a “first class,” all to itself in general English prose style, hardly requires much notice here. Hugh Latimer was a born orator of the vernacular type, and it is almost impossible to read two sentences of any work of his without reading them (or rather speaking them) aloud. Now, of course, the ancients applied rhythmical tests to oratory itself—indeed, they mostly based their studies of rhythm in prose on oratorical examples. But—whether it be the case with other modern nations and languages does not in this place matter—it certainly is the case with English, that elaborately “periodised” oratory is not liked, and therefore not common. Everybody has heard that “Burke was a dinner-bell,” and most people know the remark, attributed to Fox, that if a speech read well “it must have been a —— bad speech.” This may be exaggerated, and we shall find some later instances where spoken prose has remarkable rhythm, some even where written prose has to be spoken in order to bring the rhythm out. But Latimer’s

is not of this type. It is—with the tags of erudition obligatory at the time, and with a few flights of conventional rhetoric—mainly conversational and narrative, with the breaks, the continuances, the even or accented flow, necessary to narrative and conversation. These are not the conditions that bring out the phenomena that we are studying, and though there is everywhere—in the universally known passage describing his childhood and his father's farm, in the grim suggestion of the "judge's skin" as a desirable sign and token in England, in a hundred others—perfect command of natural flow, it would be rather out of place to apply scansion-tests to it.

Until a comparatively short time ago the "profane" Elizabethan translations (though they had been greatly tasted by men like Southey and Lamb, a hundred years since, and though at least two of them, North's *Plutarch* and Florio's *Montaigne*, have always been quasi-classics) were mainly regarded as curiosities. The late Mr Henley, however, made them the object of one of his numerous enthusiasms—enthusiasms the "strong contagion" of which, on other and especially younger men, exceeded anything that is on record for the past two generations at least, if not for much longer. The handsome reprints of them which he superintended made some of them at least much better known, and very high estimates of their position and influence in English prose have sometimes been put forth. These redemptions of past neglect are apt to be a little extravagant, and extravagance in this particular respect has not been wanting. But undoubtedly they are often delectable, and, as a whole, from the historical point of view they are never negligible. Undertaken as they were by their authors under the double influence of reverence for the classics and a not inconsiderable taste for the moderns, together with an eager desire to expand English literature, and received as they were by their readers in a similar temper, they could not but exercise influence. And that influence in the circumstances, though of a somewhat mixed, could not fail to be of a powerful and in many ways beneficial kind. Its greatest

benefit, though at the same time its not least danger, was the flood of new language and phrase that it poured into our lexicon. The fertile and irregular Elizabethan genius, avid of conceit, impatient of drab-coloured and pedestrian style, found, in the large number of new things and thoughts that it had to interpret, an excuse for borrowing and coining word and phrase in a literally extravagant fashion and degree.

The general characteristics of these translations have been well summed up by Mr Whibley,<sup>1</sup> but may be abbreviated still further, into a single short sentence, as extreme vernacularity in diction tempered by the sense of exotic matter and thought. It is doubtless true that in many cases (some say most) they did not even trouble themselves to go to Latin, far less Greek, originals, but contented themselves, as North notably did, with French or Latin half-way houses. Their productions are a store-house of the quaintest slang, and exhibit word-coinage and word-importation of a kind which would make a certain class of modern critics scold if they were atrabilious, cover their faces with the skirts of their garments if they were sensitive, and apologise for the criminal author if they were good-naturedly officious. Yet something of the ancient form comes direct, or through the French and Latin, and of necessity far more of the ancient thought and matter passes into the English, with a subtly varying, though not wholly transforming, influence. Most of them came before Euphuism, and Lyly was himself probably a better scholar than most. But if they did not exercise any direct influence on his manner he certainly represents, to no small extent, the same influences that acted on them. Only the variety of their originals, and the fact that French has never very much affected balance of an obvious kind, saved them from the teasing over-indulgence in that rhetorical trick which is at once one great characteristic, and one serious drawback, of his style.

<sup>1</sup> In his introductory *notes*, to the examples of them contained in Sir Henry Craik's *English Prose*, vol. 1 pp 335 and 349

Indeed, high as is the importance of Lyly in the history of English prose style generally, it drops very much in that of prose rhythm. From his plays it might be possible to pick out some things of merit and interest, as here

*End*    *Ō* fair Cynthia, | why do others | term thee | unconstant, |  
 whom I have ever | found | immovable? | Injurious | time, | corrupt |  
 manners, | unkind | men, | who, finding | a constancy | not to be  
 matched | in my sweet | mistress, | have christened | her with the  
 name | of wavering, | waxing, | and waning! | Is she inconstant that  
 keepeth a settled course, which since her first creation altereth not  
 one minute in her moving? There is nothing | thought | more  
 admirable | or commendable, | in the sea, | than the ebbing | and  
 flowing, | and shall the moon, | from whom | the sea | taketh | this  
 virtue, | be accounted | fickle | for increasing | and decreasing? Flowers in their buds are nothing worth till they be blown, nor  
 blossoms accounted till they be ripe fruit, and shall we then say  
 they be changeable, for that they grow from seeds to leaves, from  
 leaves to buds, from buds to their perfection? then, why be not  
 twigs that become trees children that become men, and mornings  
 that grow to evenings, termed wavering, for that they continue not  
 at one stay? Ay, but Cynthia being in her fulness decayeth, as not  
 delighting in her greatest beauty, or withering when she should be  
 most honoured. When malice cannot object anything, folly will,  
 making that a vice which is the greatest virtue. What thing (my  
 mistress excepted) being in the pride of her beauty, and latter minute  
 of her age, that waxeth young again? Tell me, | Eumenides, | what  
 is he | that having | a mistress | of ripe years, | and infinite | virtues, |  
 great honours, | and unspeakable | beauty, | but would wish | that  
 she might | grow tender again? | getting youth | by years, | and  
 never decaying | beauty | by time, | whose fair face | neither the  
 summer's | blaze | can scorch, | nor winter's | blast | chap, | nor the  
 numbing | of years | breed altering | of colours. Such | is my |  
 sweet Cynthia, | whom time cannot touch, | because | she is divine, |  
 nor will offend, | because | she is delicate | *Ō* Cynthia, | if thou

shouldest al̄ways | cōtinūe | at thy fūlness, | bōth gōds | and mēn |  
 wōuld cōspire | tō rāvish | thēe | But thou, to abate the pride of  
 our affections, dost detract from thy perfections, thinking it sufficient  
 if once in a month we enjoy a glimpse of thy majesty, and then, to  
 increase our griefs, thou dost decrease thy gleams, coming out of  
 thy royal robes, wherewith thou dazlest our eyes, down into thy  
 swath clouts, beguiling our eyes, and then——

The whole here<sup>1</sup> is very far from contemptible, and the fragments scanned are sometimes of great and subtle beauty, though the effect is still nearly always traceable to balance and antithesis of a less obtrusive and mechanical character than in *Euphues* itself. In that actual book the everlasting see-saw of antithetic balance almost inevitably spoils the rhythm which it is intended to provide. One is tempted, and perhaps the temptation need not be resisted, to arrange the sentences in parallel *stichs*<sup>2</sup>

|                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| If the course of youth had any  | The unhappiness of man's con-    |
| respect for the staff of age,   | dition,                          |
| Or the living man any regard to | Or the untowardness of his       |
| the dying mould,                | crooked nature,                  |
| We would with greater care than | Or the wilfulness of his mind,   |
| when we were young,             | Or the blindness of his heart,   |
| Shun those things that should   | That in youth he surfeiteth with |
| grieve us when we be old        | delights,                        |
| And with more severity direct   | Preventing age,                  |
| the sequel of our life          | Or if he live, continueth in     |
| For the fear of present death   | dotage,                          |
| But such is either              | Fighting death                   |

This passage, not to be unfair, I have taken almost at random, without seeking for more exaggerated examples, though (as every one with even a tincture of *Euphues* his various exertations will admit) it would be easy to find instances much more glaring. With what fatal ease the fantastic "unnatural-history" parallels, which we find in Spanish as far back at least<sup>3</sup> as the Arch-priest of Hita, lend themselves to this arrangement as of a kind of

<sup>1</sup> Part unscanned, that the reader may read it with *his* scansion

<sup>2</sup> Which themselves (as again could best be shown by different coloured inks or forms of type) are constructed of parallel sub clauses, phrases, and even single words and letters

<sup>3</sup> And much earlier in *Latin*, but in any vernacular?

chunky parquetry (it is too coarse for mosaic) is also matter of common knowledge, and it should occur, without much prompting, to any one that there is in it more than the suggestion, not merely of Bacon's sententious style in the later part of the same generation, but of Dr Johnson's, nearly two hundred years later still. In all there is the same drawback. There *is* rhythm, but its perpetual correspondences, more or less clumsily fulfilled, defeat the purpose, fail to pay the debt, of the elusive, undulating, and continually various harmony of prose.

But it is only fair to give another passage, much better and pretty free from the most teasing peculiarities of the author, whether that the general influence of his original (for in this part he is sometimes almost translating Plutarch) has a good effect on him, or for some accidental cause.

There are three things | which cause | perfection | in man— |  
 Nature, | Reason, | Use. Reason | I call | Discipline, | Use | Exer-  
 cise,— | if any one | of these branches | want, | certainly | the Iree |  
 of Virtue | must needs | wither | For Nature | without | Discipline | is  
 of small force, and Discipline without Nature more feeble. If Exercise  
 or Study be void of any of these, it availeth nothing. For as in  
 tilling of the ground and husbandry there is first chosen a fertile soil,  
 then a cunning sower, then good seed, even so must we compare  
 Nature to the fat earth, the expert husbandman to the schoolmaster,  
 the faculties and sciences to the pure seeds. If this order had not  
 been in our predecessors, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and whomso  
 ever was renowned in Greece for the glory of wisdom, they had  
 never been eternised<sup>1</sup> for wise men, neither canonised, as it were,  
 for Saints among those that study sciences. It is therefore | almost  
 evident | sign | of God's | singular | favour | towards him | that is  
 endued | with all | these qualities, | without the least | of the which |  
 man | is most miserable | But if there be any one that thinketh Wit  
 not necessary to the obtaining of Wisdom, after he hath gotten the  
 way to Virtue by Industry and Exercise, he is an Heretic, in my  
 opinion, touching the true faith of learning. For if Nature play not  
 her part, in vain is labour, and, as I said before, if Study be not  
 employed, in vain is Nature. Sloth turneth the edge of wit. Study

<sup>1</sup> This excellent word ought to have been kept, for it supplies an invaluable rhythmic variant on "eternised." I have here, as I may do elsewhere, in part divided without scanning the feet. The purpose is similar to that indicated above.

sharpeneth the mind a thing be it never so easy is hard to the idle, a thing be it never so hard is easy to the wit well employed  
 And most plainly we see in many things | the efficacy | of industry |  
 and labour<sup>1</sup>

But, again excepting the plays, where there are short prose passages of no small beauty, it must be repeated that Lyly contributes little directly to the advancement of English prose rhythm. Indirectly, however, virtue is to be counted unto him even here, and in not so very indirect a way. For, after all, whatever be the foibles of Euphuism, it stands for the first deliberate and elaborate attempt at making prose ornamental, and bringing it into definite decorative order. It corresponds, therefore, to some extent with the earlier labours of Wyatt and Surrey and their successors in regard to verse, though the parallel must not be forced too far. It is, on the whole, a failure, though an interesting failure, but it is also at the worst a symptom and forerunner, at the best a kind of early stage, of the magnificent developments which, almost at the same time, were being reached in a different way by Hooke<sup>1</sup>—which were shortly, or before very long, to be reached in the same way, bettered in good points and reformed in bad, by Raleigh and Greville and Donne, by the strange co-operative triumph of the Authorised Version, and by the final achievement of Milton and Taylor and Browne.

<sup>1</sup> It is curious and worth noting that this dignified and excellently rhythmical passage—which will be recognised by all educated persons as a commonplace, in the good sense, of ancient thought, and may suggest to some the palmary expression of it by the comic poet Symylus—is followed by one of Lyly's wildest debauches of mere snipsnap alliterative antithesis, fed by "unnatural history," stock classical anecdote, and vernacular phrase.

In the scansion above there are several things that the observant reader will, it is hoped, also note, such as the final *diminuendo* of foot length—dochmiac, pæon, amphibrach (5, 4, 3), *v inf* App III. He may try some of the rest for himself, and may also consider the objection, "Is there not an attempt at Latin 'numerous' prose here?" Does not "industry and labour" remind us of *esse videretur*? I myself am of opinion that, by this time at any rate, the "strong nativity" of English had overborne Latin rhythm both in prose and verse, but others think, and may think, differently (*V sup* p 9 note, and *inf* p 140 note).

From what we know of Lyly it is pretty certain that any peculiarity of his, whether in thought, matter, or style, whether in poetry or prose, was deliberate and conscious. From what we know of Hooker it is positively certain that, except a partly scholarly and partly pious determination to do his best on a great subject, little thought tending to mere ornamentation, and none at all of personal display, entered into his style-making. Indeed, it is probably by far the best way to take him as a representative of the plain style originally regularised by Ascham, but sublimated to its utmost possible by individual genius and by the warm atmosphere of the time. Study—and the most intelligent study—of Latin and of Greek must indeed have gone to the formation of his pellucid and most Attic grace and simplicity, but that this grace was in any way aimed at as separate and conscious “beautification” is unthinkable. Yet to what an extraordinary height—never yet trodden by any English writer of prose—he raised himself, must be perceived almost at once, by any one fitted with the necessary organs, when the *Ecclesiastical Polity* is read. One-sided admirers of the *emboyant* have indeed objected to this style as *too simple*, and have contrasted with its architectural or even sculpturesque character the almost *baroque* luxuriance, tangled with tropic bloom of phrase, which they find in Jeremy Taylor. The wiser taste relishes and admires both, but certainly does not give the lesser place to Hooker. Let us take a passage and I do not think, though many others might easily be selected, a better can be found than that which I took, but did not fully analyse from the present point of view, nearly a quarter of a century ago in writing the *History of Elizabethan Literature*

As therefōre | mān | doth consist | of different | and distinct |  
 parts, | every part | endued | with manifold | abilities | which all |  
 have their severall | ends | and actions | thereunto | referred, | so  
 there is | in this great | variety | of duties | which belong | to men, |



that dependēcy | and order | by means whereof, | the lower | sustaining | always | the more excellent, | and the higher | perfecting | the more base, | they are | in their times | and seasons | continued | with most exquisite | correspondence | Labours | of bodily | and daily | toil | purchase | freedom | for actions | of religious | joy, | which benefit | these actions | requite | with the gift | of desired | rest— | a thing | most natural | and fit | to accompany | the solemn | festival | duties | of honour | which are done | to God | For if | those principal | works | of God, | the memory | whereof | we use | to celebrate | at such times, | be but certain | tastes | and says,<sup>1</sup> | as it were, | of that final | benefit | wherein | our perfect | felicity | and bliss | lieth | folded | up,<sup>2</sup> | seeing | that the presence | of the one | doth direct | our cogitations, | thoughts, | and desires | towards | the other, | it giveth | surely | a kind | of life, | and addeth | inwardly | no small | delight | to those | so comfortable | anticipations, | especially | when | the very outward<sup>3</sup> countenance | of that | we presently | do | representeth, | after a sort, | that also | hereunto | we tend, | as festival | rest | doth that | celestial | | whereof | the very heathens | themselves, | which had not | the means | whereby | to apprehend | much, | did | notwithstanding | imagine | that it must needs | consist | in rest, | and have therefore | taught | that above | the highest | movable | sphere | there is no thing | which feeleth | alteration, | motion, | or change, | but all things | immutable, | unsubject | to passion, | blest | with eternal | continuance | in a life | of the highest | perfection, | and of that complete | abundant |

<sup>1</sup> *I e* assays

<sup>2</sup> The “up” can be included in a dochmiac if any one likes, “lieth folded up”

<sup>3</sup> This is one of the pieces (see App III) where I think “word splitting” better. But “the very out ward” is quite possible

sufficiency | within | itself | which no | possibility | of want, | main, |  
or defect | can touch <sup>1</sup>

Here there are divers things, besides the extraordinary inevitableness of the scansion, to be noticed—two especially. The first—which if any one should *not* notice, it is to be feared that he had better not waste any more time in this study—is the adaptation of the periodic *structure* of classical sentence to a large periodic *rhythm*, the abrupter and more intrusive parallelism or balance, as we find it in Lyly and others, being widened, softened, and moulded out into great undulating sweeps of phrase, rising, hovering, descending, with a wing-like motion. The particular flights in this special instance are rather long, but Hooker elsewhere shows himself perfectly well acquainted with the advantages of associating long with short sentences. Probably he did not do so here because he felt, consciously or unconsciously, that very short ones would give an abrupt and staccato effect, instead of the soothing sweetness, long drawn out, which suited his subject.

The second device is a complementary one, but one which would not have occurred as a complement to any one but a man of genius, or a fortunate student possessing exactly what Hooker did not possess, a museum of models before him. It consists in using what may be called the "title-word" of the subject—"Rest"—as a sort of key-note or dominant of the music—a pivot or stepping-stone of the motion. The word itself, even independently of, but much more with, its meaning, is an important and beautiful one,<sup>2</sup> and the critical certainty of its being pro-

<sup>1</sup> There is hardly a passage behind us which scans itself so "straight off" as this, and there will not be many such in front of us.

<sup>2</sup> It is therefore scarcely in the least surprising that the Revisers—who touched nothing that they did not deface and defile—intruded the unnecessary word "sabbath" before it in the famous passage of *Heb* iv 9, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Here they do not even deserve the miserable encomium of composing a better "crib" for illiterate clergy than the Authorised, for there is only one word in the Greek, *σαββατισμός*, and I never knew that *σμος* meant "rest," while I have always been told that *σαββατον* did. And King James's men had already cared for the Greekless, abundantly and much more exactly, by putting "a keeping of a sabbath" in the margin.

nounced with a strong pause (or "rest" in the other sense) by any good speaker or reader, gives it additional power

Hooker, it will be observed, does not bring it in too soon. He does not, in particular, begin with it, as a writer given to the lower and showier rhetoric might have been tempted to do. He does not bring it in very often lest the delicate effect might be weakened. The first sentence is without it, the mind's ear is kept expectant of the particular example of "variety, dependency, order," that the author is thinking of. But it comes at the very centre or summit of the second, and satisfies the past expectation, while prompting more. In the third sentence the *word* again hides itself, "folded up" (as in the actual phrase) with "that final benefit wherein our perfect felicity and bliss lieth," as in a paraphrase or parable. But it emerges again at the last, basing the beginning and supporting the end of the first clause, while ushering in the magnificent definition of Rest itself, which completes and concludes the paragraph.

In another famous passage, that on the sanctions of Law, Hooker varies his sentence-lengths much more, indeed, the whole context is much longer, and does not attempt the same elaborate but intense harmony. He is arguing here, and driving his argument home, not indulging in relevant but half-dreamy meditation and illustration. But he uses the second device of repetition of the principal word more than ever. Here the word "law"—itself how different-sounding from "rest"—is employed daringly, hammered in, and redoubled with an almost rattling peal of argument, as aggressive as Hooker's can ever be. Sixteen or seventeen times in a page does the word recur, and yet there is no monotonous effect, each hammer-blow drives in a successive and different rivet, and yet the whole is no mere clatter, but a martial music. It is, however, perhaps less characteristic than the following—one of the most exquisite "Evening Voluntaries" of English prose.

That there is somewhat higher than either of these two, no other proof doth need than the very process of man's desire,

which being natural should be frustrate, if there were not some farther thing, wherein it might rest at the length contented, which in the former it cannot do. For man doth not seem to rest satisfied, either with fruition of that wherewith his life is preserved, or with performance of such actions as advance him most deservedly in estimation, but doth further covet, yea oftentimes manifestly pursue with great sedulity and earnestness, that which cannot stand him in any stead for vital use, that which exceedeth the reach of sense, yea somewhat above capacity of reason, somewhat divine and heavenly, which with hidden exultation it rather surmiseth than conceiveth, somewhat it seeketh, and what that is directly it knoweth not, yet very intente desire thereof doth so incite it, that all other known delights and pleasures are laid aside, they give place to the search of this but only suspected desire. If the soul of man did serve only to give him being in this life, then things appertaining unto this life would content him, as we see they do other creatures, which creatures enjoying what they live by seek no further, but in this contentation do show a kind of acknowledgement that there is no higher good which doth any way belong unto them. With us it is otherwise. For although the beauties, riches, honours, sciences, virtues, and perfections of all men living, were in the present possession of one, yet somewhat beyond and above all this there would still be sought and earnestly thirsted for. So that Nature even in this life doth plainly claim and call for a more divine perfection than either of these two that have been mentioned.

It would be strange if, in such a period, there were not many other examples of beautiful style and appealing rhythm, but they are mostly casual, and seldom long upheld. It was reserved for the next century—availing itself at once of the rhythmical accomplishment of Hooker and of the extended vocabulary of Lyly and the translators—to produce the absolute masterpieces of the kind. But it may be expected that something should be said of *Sidney*, who has had very great praise from some, and who has even been regarded as a rescuer of English prose style from the polluting extravagances of Euphuism. As a matter of fact, Sir Philip, an admirable master of metre, came rather too soon to be a master of prose rhythm, and at times he indulged in fashions of writing (I am told, directly derived from Spanish) which were more fatal to a really beautiful cadence than Euphuism itself. Here is a well-known example

*To my dear Lady and Sister, the Countess of Pembroke*

Here have you now, most dear, and most worthy to be most dear, lady, this idle work of mine, which, I fear, like the spider's web, will be thought fitter to be swept away than wove to any other purpose. For my part, in very truth, as the cruel fathers among the Greeks were wont to do to the babes they would not foster, I could well find in my heart to cast out in some desert of forgetfulness this child which I am loth to father. But you desired me to do it, and your desire to my heart is an absolute commandment. Now it is done only for you, only to you, if you keep it to yourself, or commend it to such friends who will weigh errors in the balance of good will, I hope, for the father's sake, it will be pardoned, perchance made much of, though in itself it have deformities. For indeed for severer eyes it is not, being but a trifle, and that triflingly handled. Your dear self can best witness the manner, being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest by sheets sent unto you as fast as they were done. In sum, a young head, not so well stayed as I would it were, and shall be when God will, having many fancies begotten in it, if it had not been in some way delivered, would have grown a monster, and more sorry might I be that they came in than that they gat out. But his chief safety shall be the walking abroad, and his chief protection the bearing the livery of your name, which, if much good will do not deceive me, is worthy to be a sanctuary for a greater offender. This say I because I know thy virtue so, and this say I because it may be for ever so, or, to say better, because it will be for ever so.

Most people, I suppose, will admit without difficulty that this is not quite a success. The poet's hand breaks out sometimes "Now it is done only for you, only to you," though dangerously choriambic in suggestion, is pretty, and need not be excluded from prose, which is more tolerant of repeated identical tetrasyllabic feet than of shorter ones. I do not hate parenthesis or epexegetis, but "most dear, and most worthy to be most dear" seems to me a rather vile phrase, and as for the jingle-jangle of the last sentence, it is worthy of Don Adriano de Armado himself. Of course there are some good things in the text of the *Arcadia*, but the sentences are, as a rule, heavy and clumsy, ill-constructed in themselves and ill-compacted into paragraphs. The *Apology for Poetry* is, much better, but it is, as it ought to be, in a plain

argumentative style, admitting of little ornament. There are few things of the kind more curious than the comparison of Sidney and his friend Greville, who was certainly not Sir Philip's superior as a poet, but who, living later, was enabled to catch, even somewhat beforehand, the amazing elevation and inspiration of prose style and prose rhythm that set in with the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Collects and other portions of the *Book of Common Prayer* have been naturally selected by Mr. Shelly (*v. sup.* p. 9 note), and perhaps by others, as examples of that Latinising of English rhythm which I have (*ibid.*) rather declined. I should myself be quite ready to leave the matter to an impartial umpire on this very ground. Even where there is apparent correspondence in collocation of *syllables*, it seems to me that, as in other cases where I have pointed the same thing out, these obstinately group themselves in different English *feet*. In fact, the "classical metre" phenomena in verse reproduce themselves in prose, except that the liberty of the latter permits the situation to be saved.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AUTHORISED VERSION AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE ORNATE STYLE

The coming of harvest—The Authorised Version of the Bible—The sixtieth chapter of the book of *Isaiah*—A V, Septuagint, and Vulgate scanned—Discussion of each—Earlier English versions for comparison—Coverdale—The “Bishops’”—Remarks on them—Geneva and Douay—A New Testament example, the Charity passage of *I Cor*—atrocities of the Revisers—The older versions here—Results of scrutiny—Observation on use of synonyms—Individual writers—Raleigh—Greville—Donne—The palmiest days—Bacon(?)—Burton—Beauties and faults—Milton—Disputes about his prose, and their causes—Close connection of Milton’s style with oratory—Some of its faults—Partial foot analysis—Taylor—the general high estimate of him—Examples—Rhythmical characteristics—Browne—Coleridge’s charge against him—Special character of his charm, and special treatment of it required—The finale of *Urn Burial*—Interim observation on overture—The close of the *Garden of Cyrus*—Short passages from *Religio Medici*—From the *Hydriotaphia*—From the *Garden of Cyrus*—The *Letter to a Friend*—And *Christian Morals*—Others perforce omitted

THE processes and processions of the two harmonies march generally in parallel lines, but these parallels are often, like the bars of the instrument of that name, not longitudinally coincident and co-extensive. Just as the period of rhythmical pupillage which has sometimes been very unjustly dismissed as one of mere doggerel, and which extended from Wyatt to Gascoigne, prepared the way for the outburst of pure and finished poetry which followed the *Shepherd’s Kalendar*, so the livelier, longer, more abundant and more various period of prose exercise

which we have surveyed in the last chapter led up, not merely to the single, precocious, and to a certain extent isolated, masterpiece of Hooker, but to an immense development a very little later

It was almost inevitable that this development should disclose a certain parting of the ways. As soon as a deliberately ornate style comes into existence, there will be many who cannot reach it, and some, perhaps, who would not if they could. Now rhythm is the chief and the most difficult form or constituent of ornateness, and it must therefore be among the first to be abandoned, failed in, or not aimed at. We shall have something, nay much, to say of the "plain-stylists" of the earlier seventeenth century, but we must first attack its chief glories—perhaps the principal documents (at least until the nineteenth century) of our present quest. And let us "begin with Jove," as was bidden of old.

One of the highest points<sup>1</sup> of English prose is probably reached in the Authorised Version of the sixtieth chapter of *Isaiah*. So utterly magnificent is the rendering that even those dolefullest of creatures—the very Zim and Ochim and Iim of the fauna of our literature—the Revisers of 1870-1885, hardly dared to touch it at all.<sup>2</sup> To compare it with the same passage in other languages is a liberal education in despising and discarding the idle predominance of "the subject." The subject is the same in all, and the magnificence of the imagery can hardly be obscured by any. Of the Hebrew I cannot unfortunately speak, for at the time when I knew a very little Hebrew I knew nothing about literary criticism, and now, when I know perhaps a little about literary criticism, I have entirely lost my Hebrew. But I can read it with some

<sup>1</sup> For the analysis of another, the "Love" passage of the *Canticles*, I may refer to the book cited in *Preface*. In its quarter of a century of life it has had the good fortune to please good wits, I believe, including even some who dislike the division of words.

<sup>2</sup> With their irremediable and essential folly of pottering and meticulous blot making (for it is "mendation" not "emendation"), they have, however, pluralised "peoples," where the *s* is not an improvement, and substituted "nations" for "the Gentiles," thereby, if not hamstringing, certainly not enhancing, the beauty of the rhythm. The two later verses blazed vision even into *their* blindness, and they left them alone,



critical competence in Greek and in Latin, in French and in German, and I can form some idea of what its rhetorical value is in Italian and in Spanish. That any one of the modern languages (even Luther's German) can vie with ours I can hardly imagine any one, who can appreciate both the sound and the meaning of English, maintaining for a moment. With the Septuagint and the Vulgate it is different, for the Greek of the one has not quite lost the glory of the most glorious of all languages, and has in places even acquired a certain additional uncanny witchery from its eastern associations, while as for the Vulgate Latin "there is no mistake about *that*." But we can meet and beat them both. Let us take the overture and the crowning passage in the three, also taking (though with all due ceremony of apology) the liberty of dividing and quantifying all

Arise, | shine, | for thy light | is come, | and the glory | of the  
 Lord | is risen | upon thee || For, behold, | the darkness | shall  
 cover | the earth, | and gross | darkness | the people, | but the Lord |  
 shall arise | upon thee, | and his glory | shall be seen | upon thee ||  
 And the Gentiles | shall come | to thy light, | and kings | to the  
 brightness | of thy rising |

The sun | shall be no more | thy light | by day, | neither | for  
 brightness | shall the moon | give light unto thee | but the Lord |  
 shall be to thee | an everlast|ing light, | and thy God | thy glory ||  
 Thy sun | shall no more | go down, | neither | shall thy moon |  
 withdraw herself | for the Lord | shall be | thine everlast|ing light,  
 and the days | of thy mourning | shall be ended |

Φωτίζου | φωτίζου | Ἱερουσαλήμ, | ἡκεῖ γάρ | σὺν τῷ φωτί, | καὶ ἡ  
 δόξα | κυρίου | ἐπὶ σέ | ἀνατέταλκεν | Ἰδοὺ | σκότος | καλύψει γῆν,  
 καὶ γνόφος | ἐπ' ἔθνη, | ἐπὶ δὲ σέ | φανήσεται | κύριος, | καὶ ἡ δόξα  
 αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σέ | ὀφθήσεται | καὶ πορεύσονται | βασιλεῖς | τῷ φωτί  
 σου, | καὶ ἔθνη | τῇ λαμπρότητί σου

Καὶ οὐκ ἔσται | σοι ἔτι | ὁ ἥλιος | εἰς φῶς | ἡμέρας, | οὐδὲ ἀνατολῇ |  
σελήνης | φωτιεῖ σου | τὴν νύκτα, | ἀλλ' ἔσται σοι | κύριος | φῶς  
αἰώνιον | καὶ ὁ θεὸς | δόξα σου | Οὐ γὰρ δύσεται | ὁ ἡλιός σοι, | καὶ  
ἡ σελήνη | σοι οὐκ | ἐκλείψει | ἔσται γὰρ | σοι κύριος | φῶς αἰώνιον, |  
καὶ ἀναπληρωθήσονται | αἱ ἡμέραι | τοῦ πένθους σου |

Surge, | illūmināre<sup>1</sup> | Jērusalēm<sup>1</sup> | quia venit | lūmen | tuū | et<sup>1</sup>  
glōria | dōmini | super te | orta est | Quia ecce | tenebrae | opeient<sup>1</sup> |  
terrām | et caligo | pōpulos, | super te | autē | oriētur | Dōminūs |  
et glōria | ejus | in te | videbitur | Et ambulabunt | gentēs | in  
lūmine tuo | et reges | in splendore | ortus | tui |

Nōn erit tibi | ampliūs | Sol ad | lucendū | per diē, | nec  
splendor | lunae | illu|minabit te | sed erit tibi | Dōminūs | in  
lucē | sempiternā | et Deū | tuus | in glōriā | tuā | Nōn  
occidet | ultra | Sol tuus | et luna | tua | nōn minuetur | quia erit |  
tibi | Dōminūs | in lucē | sempiternā | et complebuntur | dies |  
luctus | tui

Here the Seventy undoubtedly cut the worst figure, though they may have the best language and it might be only fair to give a passage or two from either of the *Wisdoms* (of Solomon or of Sirach) to show what they could do when they were more at home in matter. They seem to have been dazzled by the imaginative magnificence of the passage. The mere repetition of *φωτίζου*, though it loses a chance, need not be, and is not, bad in itself, but it certainly is not assisted by the necessary reoccurrence of *φῶς*, which the Latin also does not escape, but which we luckily do. They have been far too prodigal of short syllables, and though, of course, others may not agree with my footing or quantifying of *ἀνατέταλκεν*, no arrangement will get rid of the six consecutive shorts<sup>2</sup> *σκότος* and *γνόφος* is not a pretty

<sup>1</sup> As to these and some other *apparent* false quantities, I am not afraid of any real scholar mistaking me. The quantification had become partly, if not largely, accentual, and elision is optional or absent.

<sup>2</sup> Unless, which is not impossible, *σέ* or *ἐπὶ* was "stressed up" for the time I have, however, not attempted here, as I have in the Latin, a partly accentual

assonance, and the rhymes of *φανήσεται* and *ὀφθήσεται* are even less appropriate. Nor, yet again, is the homœoteleuton of *φῶτι σου* and *λαμπρότητι σου* at all agreeable, at least to my ears when they remember the close of the Platonic *Apology*. Still, it is grand (especially the last two verses), but it is very much grander in the Vulgate. The substitution of *Surge, illumine* for the double *φωτίζου* is a great gain, for you get the varied lights of the vowels and the varied cadence of the feet. The dissyllabic possessives *tuum, tuo, tui*, are a clear improvement on the cases of *σύ*, especially when it comes after the nouns, and mere homœoteleuton is avoided, except in the case of *sempiternam* and *tuam*, which hardly counts. But the greatest improvement is in the general rhythm, where St Jerome may have had the advantage in individual genius, and must have had that of the old "Itala" before him, as well as thorough familiarity with a dialect certainly better in relation to classical Latin than that of the Alexandrian Jews (though, as above observed, not to be scoffed at) was to classical Greek.

Something, nay a good deal, of this improved rhythm has passed into the Authorised Version, of course through its predecessors<sup>1</sup> as well as directly; but the further advance is astounding. In the very opening we have the benefit of that glorious vowel *z* which, in perfection (though the Germans have something of it in their *ei*), belongs only to English<sup>2</sup>. Its clarion sound is thrice repeated in five words ("thy" has it slightly modified and muffled in note) with indifferent consonants preceding and following in each case, and contrasted in the strongest and most euphonious manner possible with the long *o*'s of "Glory of the Lord," while the vigour of the contrast shades off

---

scansion, because the actual or conventional accents are there to serve. And they will do no small service if called upon. But classical Greek was more tolerant of accumulated shorts than English, witness the proceleusmatic as a foot, and occasional consecutive tribrachs as combinations.

<sup>1</sup> For these see above (pp 123 126) and below (pp 149 152), in the latter case the actual passage.

<sup>2</sup> The attempt to make it diphthongal simply betrays false pronunciation—*ai* is beautiful, but it is not the same as *z*.

into the duller resonances of "risen upon thee" I have spoken of the bad effect of *σκότος* and *γνόφος* *Tenebrae* and *caligo* are an immense improvement on these, but they cannot compare with the further gain of the retention and amplification in "darkness" and "gross darkness" In turn of phrase it is the same a dozen examples could be given, but one will suffice—the unimaginable betterment of "splendor *lunae* illuminabit te" (good as it is in itself) by "for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee"

But it is in the total rhythm and harmonic ordonnance that the game is most surely ours That we borrowed both fiddle and rosin to some extent has been admitted, but we can pay the debt, and keep our own increase, and be rich beyond counting The opening clause, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," is a possible verse, but it is not an obtrusive one, and any suggestion of it being verse at all is at once quenched by the cadence of the second half It is the same with the next, and throughout, that inevitable *nisus* towards metre which the ancient critics had noticed being invariably counteracted, neutralised, and turned into "the other harmony" by succeeding phrases which achieve the prose suggestion and negative the poetic As for the second section (*vv* 19 and 20) I do not know how many thousand times in my life (the number is not poetical) I have said these verses over to myself with ever-fresh perception of their inexhaustible sweetness and splendour Nowhere, perhaps,<sup>1</sup> is the enormous advantage which absence of inflection and its identical terminations confers better illustrated We have escaped the continued *-ou* and *-ετα*

<sup>1</sup> The book (*Isaiah*) is, of course, full of such things Perhaps the next best is "Thine eyes | shall see | the King | in his beauty, | they shall behold | the land | that is very | far off Almost every important vowel sound (except long *a*) utilised, hardly one except *z* repeated, for "shall" is too much in *thesis* to equal "land," and the foot arrangement unsurpassable The mere contrast even of the trochaically ending first half, and the spondaic or double monosyllabic second, is a miracle

of the Greek, the wearisome *am*'s and *um*'s of the Latin. We are free to devote ourselves to that co-ordination of varied rhythm and vowel-music which belongs to prose. The fluctuation of the phrase-movement, the slight touches of alliteration here and there, the soft trochaic endings not too frequently sweetening the bolder iambs or monosyllables, are ambrosial, and the final phrase of an anapæst and two third pæons gives a dying close<sup>1</sup>, that no verse can outgo—that very little verse can equal.

The actual scansion requires a few more remarks. That of the Greek and that of the Latin are both mere sporting attempts, and subject to what each scholar troweth. I would only interject a caution that Aristotelian remarks or Quintilianist rules must be largely "salted" both for the Seventy and for St Jerome. Each version must have been subject to accentual influences, to which in the former case the actual accents are very puzzling guides, while in the latter we have no guides at all.

But on the approximate correctness of the English, while "open to offers" of improvement, I must on the whole set up my rest. It certainly brings out the beauty of the passage pretty exactly, as it presents itself to my ear, and what is more, it admits of some not too rash inspection of the means by which these results are obtained. \* It will be observed that the *total* rhythm is distinctly iambic, as if the artist<sup>2</sup> (whether consciously or unconsciously matters not one straw) had been driven by the double keynote of sense and sound in the first word to "rising" rhythm. But he attains the necessary prose variety by taking what we may call "the greater iambic compass"—iamb itself, anapæst (= iamb with a preliminary short), amphibrach (iamb with a short breath of suffix), and lastly, pæon, where, in all but the first form of

<sup>1</sup> If they had followed the *ἀναπληθίσονταί* of the Greek (one of its best words by the way, as indeed the whole verse is one of its best verses) or the *complebuntur* of the Latin, *actum esset*. "Fulfilled" is a good word, but it would be fatal here. "Completed" is not a bad one, but it would be an outrage. "Finished" would not break the rhythm, but it would very much impoverish the sound. "Ended" is the "lonely word" that would do to end with, and they got it, no matter (*v inf*) whence.

<sup>2</sup> A composite one, but, again, no matter for that.

pæon, which he never uses, the effect of the foot is iambic expanded in one way or another<sup>1</sup>. And thus you find that, throughout the extract, the vast majority of the feet used are *iamboid*—that is to say, they begin with a short syllable and proceed to a long one. But if this were universal it would contravene the great law of prose rhythm, which is Variety, and so he provides a certain small number of trochees to check the monotony, and some of those precious monosyllabic feet which give English an actual advantage, both in verse and prose, over Latin. And yet further, it may and should be observed that the arrangement and companionship of feet is not only different from that of verse, but impossible in it. Take for instance the frequent association of anapæst and amphibrach. Now, as perhaps a few of the few probable readers of this book may remember, I am not myself a great partisan of the amphibrach in the scansion of English verse, while others (of no doubt equally good or better judgment) allow and welcome it. Either side may be right. But it is incontestable that you must adopt one scansion or another, you cannot, in verse, combine both

The black bands | came o'vēr

The Alps and | thēn snōw

may be amphibrachic or anapæstic, but if you try to combine both measures, as in

The black bands | came o'vēr the Alps | and thēr snōw,  
the result will be the most hideous cacophony and jolt<sup>2</sup>.  
There is no such thing in "ōf thē Lōrd | is rīsēn,"  
anapæst + amphibrach, or in | "thē peōple | bŭt thē  
Lōrd," amphibrach + anapæst.

<sup>1</sup> The symbols will exhibit the correspondence more clearly *oculis fidelibus*—Iamb, ∪— Anapæst, ∪∪— Amphibrach, ∪—|∪ Fourth pæon, ∪∪|∪—, while, second pæon, ∪—|∪∪, is iamb and two shorts, and third, ∪|∪—|∪, iamb with short on each side.

<sup>2</sup> Some would, of course, prefer even bacchic or antibacchic rhythm —∪∪ or ∪—∪— But to my ear these feet in English verse always, and in prose generally, slip into the others.

But, it may be said, this is merely academic, you ought to compare, if you compare at all, with the previous *English* versions With all my heart It is not of much use here to take Wyclif,<sup>1</sup> and Tyndale did not translate *Isaiah* Coverdale's first version, and the "Bishops," which represents an improvement on the "Great" (itself to a large extent Coverdale's revised), and which was the ostensible "basis" of the Authorised Version, will suffice, with well-deserved glances right and left at Geneva and Douay

The first glance at Coverdale<sup>2</sup> will show that the miraculous beauty of the 1611 version owes but little to him

And therefore get thee up betimes, for thy light cometh, and the glory of the Lord shall rise up upon thee For lo ! while the darkness and clouds covereth the earth and the people, the Lord shall shew thee light, and his glory shall be seen in thee The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness that springeth forth upon thee Thy sun shall never go down, and thy moon shall never be taken away, but the Lord himself shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God shall be thy glory The sun shall never be thy daylight, and the light of the moon shall never shine unto thee, for the Lord himself shall be thine everlasting light, and thy sorrowful days shall be rewarded thee

The "Bishops," more than thirty years afterwards, and with more than one or two versions between to help, does not improve much upon this, except at the very close

Get thee up betimes and be bright, O Jerusalem, for thy light cometh, and the glory of the Lord is risen up upon thee For lo ! while the darkness and cloud covereth the earth and the people, the Lord shall shew thee light, and his glory shall be seen in thee The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness that springeth forth upon thee The sun shall never be thy daylight, and the light of the moon shall never shine upon thee, but the Lord himself shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God shall be thy glory Thy sun shall never go down, and thy moon shall not be hid for the Lord himself shall be thine everlasting light, and thy sorrowful days shall be ended

---

<sup>1</sup> The Wyclifite versions were unprinted, and though occasional resemblances (on which some lay stress) occur in the Authorised Version, they are probably due either directly to the Vulgate, or to Rheims Douay

<sup>2</sup> Ed Bagster (London, 1847) I may perhaps be allowed to remark that any apparent belittlement of versions (except the Revised) other than the Authorised is merely "comparative" and not at all "rascally"

It will be observed there is really not much difference between these, and that the version, which was published just when poor "Miles *quondam* Exon" (as he used regretfully to sign himself in his last decade) was dead or dying, owes a very great deal to that which he himself (with some slight help from Tyndale no doubt, but very improbably in this place) had brought out thirty-three years before. It is a curious question whether the homelinesses and wants of polish in both, especially in the first, would have struck us much if we had not had the polished perfection of the Authorised Version. But the actual comparison is most curious. The Old Guard of "Everything depends upon the meaning" had better get them up betimes, and have their weapons ready, if they want to prove that there is any difference in meaning here. But "oh! the difference to *us*" of the expression! Neither Coverdale nor his half-colleagues, half-supplanters, have thought of that simplest of deletions, the reform of the repeated *up-upon*. Compare again the rhythmical insignificance of "the darkness<sup>1</sup> and cloud[s] covereth the earth and the people" with the splendour achieved by the very simple rhetorical sleights of parallelism and repetition in "darkness covers the earth, and *gross* darkness the people." Value, if you can do it, the enormous advantage of "*And* the Gentiles" as well as "of thy *rising*" as contrasted with "that springeth forth on thee." Weigh the gain of "no more" and of the excision of those otiose "nevers," and the burnishing up of the parallels in the second part of the extract, and the artistry of the omission of "*shall be* thy glory," and the substitution of "of thy mourning" for "thy sorrowful" rhythmically. And lastly, note how, though the force of the matter seems to have put at once in Coverdale's hand the magnificent phrase "For the Lord himself<sup>1</sup> | shall be | thine everlasting light," with the

<sup>1</sup> It may well be said that the omission of "himself" later was something of a loss—though, I think, cause may be shown for it. And the "Bishops," though I do not mean to insinuate that they were "Bishops of wood," deserve "croziers of gold" for having found out "ended," though they could not lead up to it properly.



power of the great dochmiac shooting it up, and the swell of the pæon<sup>1</sup> slowing its downward glide—though the “Bishops” actually hit (like Geneva and Douay) upon “ended,”—neither Coverdale nor his banded brethren could finish the phrase accordingly, and left it to King James’s men to put the apple of gold in a picture of more than silver

But Geneva and Douay—have they no part in the accomplishment? Let us see

Undoubtedly they have Both had preceded the Authorised Version in the important substitution of “Arise” for “Get thee up” But neither had thought of “shine,” which is almost more important, phonetically and rhythmically, Geneva having “be bright” and Douay “be illuminated,” which latter is a rather disastrous result of following the “authentic” Vulgate Geneva has “for thy light is come,” but Douay spoils “for” into “because” “The glory of *our* Lord,” which the one set of refugees gave, is not so good as “the glory of *the* Lord,” which the other kept The great “light” which the ultra-Protestants supplied to King James’s men is the opposition or amplification of “darkness” and “*gross* darkness” with the distribution over “earth” and “people” The ultra- (or infra-) Catholics kept this distribution, but their servile ascription to the Vulgate obliged them to “mist” (for *caligo*), which is quite definitely inferior to “gross darkness” for “stylistic” and rhythmical purposes Both have “brightness of thy rising” instead of the clumsier earlier versions, but Geneva does not improve it by “rising *up*” in the “sun and moon” passage Both fail to reach the rhythmical perfection attained by the Authorised Version, Geneva having “the brightness of the moon shine upon thee” and “day-light in thee” Douay has the wrong word in “sorrow,” though the right in “ended,” while the Genevans had

<sup>1</sup> Anti word splitters can have another dochmiac if they like It will be good, but not, I think, so good We want a pause on the light scattering “last” after the rush up of “thine ever,” or if anybody prefers a long “thine,” the two anapæsts of “shall be thine” and “everlast”

already "found the chrysolite" in "the days of thy mourning shall be ended" It is therefore quite fair to say that the Authorised has very numerous and very particular indebtednesses to these, in one case very questionable friends, in the other unquestioned enemies But it is also fair to add that, if it borrowed good things wherever it found them, it bettered them, made them from promising parts into a perfect whole, and so also made them its own

Let us, for another example, take what is perhaps the finest passage, rhythmically, of the New Testament, as "Arise, shine" is not far from being the finest of the Old<sup>1</sup> The mess which those unfortunate Revisers made of this is notorious Being utterly ignorant of English literature they altered "glass" to "mirror," because, I suppose, they were clever enough to know that "glass" was not used for mirrors in the Apostle's days, and not clever enough to have heard of Gascoigne's "*Steel Glass*" in the days of the "Authorised" translators themselves By recurring to "love," instead of "charity"<sup>2</sup> (an error, even from the strictest "cub" point of view, for it leaves the English reader uncertain whether ἀγάπη or ἔρως is meant), they have at one blow cut the whole rhythm of the passage to pieces, and substituted ugly jolting thuds for undulating spring-work Because they thought a cymbal did not "tinkle" but did "clang," they spoilt the sound of a whole phrase, and very doubtfully improved its sense, by altering to "clanging" (they had not even the sense to try "clashing," and I wonder why they did not use "bang") Because of the absurd objection to synonyms which has been, and will be, pilloried, they spoilt the euphony by making both the "prophecies" and the "knowledge" be "done away" They had not even the courage to be literal, where it would have been again in place, by rendering "*through* a mirror," and they

<sup>1</sup> I should like to have tried some from *Job*, but space cries "No!"

<sup>2</sup> The excuse commonly made for them—that the word "charity" has been "degraded"—is ridiculous The exchange *recognises*, and therefore confirms, the "degradation" For "loving kindness" there might have been a faint excuse, for "love," none

deliberately underwent the curse of Mr Pendennis's schoolmaster by rendering δὲ "and" instead of "but" in the final clause

The translators of the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries being all good Englishmen, and faithful speakers of English, avoided most of these horrors — though Tyndale, the "Great" Bible, the "Bishops'," and, of course, Geneva, probably out of mere Protestant "cussedness," spoilt the passage by "love" It was all the more to the credit of 1611, that, following the Vulgate, Wyclif, and Rheims, and adopting a term which had a perfectly well recognised ecclesiastical meaning, they went back to "charity," and so got a matchless word, the very sound-equal of the Greek ἀγάπη, and capable of exercising musical dominance through the whole The opening verse is curiously close throughout, with "If" in Wyclif and Rheims (the Vulgate having *sz*) for "Though" Every older version I have compared has "tinkling" But the Authorised Version exhibits afresh the solace of its excellent boldness by substituting "to be burned" for "so that I be burned," which in various forms all the others have, and which, though really the same in meaning, is more literal from the Greek The gain in expression will strike every one, save a Reviser who has not yet gone to his own place The comparison of the versions of ἐν αἰνίγματι, which the Vulgate keeps unchanged (*in enigmatē*), is most striking No English translator seems to have dared "in an enigma," and the Revisers have only dared "in a riddle" in the margin, though "through a mirror as in riddles" would have been better than their actual blunder They kept the "darkly," though they threw away the "glass," and though "darkly" is certainly not a literal version of the Greek Wyclif had, curiously enough, written "by a mirror in darkness" But Tyndale has "in a glass, even in a dark speaking", the "Great," ditto, Geneva, practically the same, with "and" for "even", and the "Bishops'" repeats Tyndale and the "Great", while Rheims itself, for once forsaking the Vulgate, gives "by

a glass *in a dark sort*" I fancy this was one of the instances when our men said to themselves, *Fas ab hoste*, and triumphantly bettered their borrowing by the adverb "In a glass darkly" has been one of the literary catch-words of the English language ever since, and I am afraid that Dante would have branded it on the Revisers' souls with very unpleasant additions, circumstances, and location, though we may "charitably," if not "lovingly," hope that this last would have been recorded in the second *Cantica*, not the first

But, because of these admitted borrowings, is it therefore fair to dismiss the Authorised Version itself as a mere mosaic, or to revive, to its discredit, the endless chatter about "plagiarism" that is so familiar in the mouths of the "tydifs, terceletts, and oules" of criticism? Most certainly not, and indeed the very use of the word "mosaic" gives the user helplessly into the hand of his enemies, and the Book's defenders. Give any but a real artist a handful of enamel cubes, and see if he can make a picture out of them! But one can carry the war farther, and with greater devastation, than this

In the first place, there are, after all, only a certain number of English equivalents in phrase for a given number of Hebrew, Greek, or Latin words, and it is the selection of these possibilities which is the first thing, the sense that a precursor has selected aright being only inferior, if inferior at all, to his own genius in selection

But in the second and far more important place, it is the combination of these selections, the additions made to them, and the result achieved, which must decide the matter. I have before suggested the idea of printing passages in different-coloured inks, and the process would here indicate the borrowings, as they are called. It would then be seen at a glance, as it can now be seen by moderately careful reading, that the Translators have added not a little, as in the wonderful opening "Arise, shine" onwards, and that the combination of their actual followings is more wonderful still. The successive earlier versions are no doubt almost invariably improvements

upon each other in combined rhythm. The advances made by the Geneva people over their forerunners are great, those by Douay-Rheims on Geneva not small, though counterbalanced by some fallings back, but the advance of the Authorised Version, as a whole, almost distances these two last.

Of the numerous means by which these miraculous results are attained it would be out of place to speak here at any great length. But there is one which, for reasons, cannot be passed over, it is the free employment of synonyms for the same original word in different places. I remember my own almost incredulous surprise when I first saw fault found with this practice, by one of the good people who look upon an English Bible as merely a "crib" for ignorant laity and insufficiently educated clergy. But I can add another memory before mentioned—the surprise of a foreign scholar (who not only knew English literature well, but spoke and wrote the language as I wish I could speak or write French or German) when I myself claimed, as a special virtue of our tongue, its abundance of not always exactly synonymous synonyms. He seemed to think that "one thought, one word" was the counsel of perfection in language, while my ideal was as many slightly varied thoughts as possible for a word, and as many distinctly varied words as possible for a thought. "Philologotheosophically" (as Sir Thomas Urquhart might say) there is no doubt much to be said on both sides, though I hold to my opinion. But, even thus, from our present point of view the advantage of synonyms and the wisdom of employing them must surely be altogether beyond question<sup>1</sup>. Unless you want absolute *epanorthosis* or repetition, which, though occasionally effective, is very rarely desirable, it will almost always happen that the English companions of the same Hebrew or Greek word in one place will require a different sound in the English substitute from that which they demand or suffer in another. I am sure it is not rash to say that a very large part of the excellence

<sup>1</sup> The invaluable Mason (*v* App II) saw it already

of the Authorised Version in style and rhythm is due to the use of synonyms or quasi-synonyms, and I think one would be equally safe in saying that, with a rigid rendering of "same word by same word," rhythmical perfection is simply impossible.

The above remarks were written, almost to a letter, in the shape in which it is hoped that they will appear, before the newspaper correspondences and discussions<sup>1</sup> which the anniversary of the Authorised Version called forth, and therefore still more before the publication of any new books on the subject. I had already, twenty years earlier,<sup>2</sup> made some strictures, as severe as I could then decently make them, on the shortcomings of the Revised Version, and had more recently, still without any view to the anniversary, but with much to the plan of this book, made a fresh and independent study of the sources and parallels discussed above. I found in the newspaper defenders of the Version, of course, much support for my own views, and, in particular, I was very glad to find a translator of proved quality like Bishop Welldon taking exactly the same view of the synonym-question which I had already put in the paragraph above. But I found, on the other side, whether among those who defended the Revised Version itself, or those who wanted still further revision,<sup>3</sup> hardly anything

<sup>1</sup> I myself wrote on the subject in the *Glasgow Herald*, but most of the text above was already written when the editor asked me for the article. There is perhaps one point, a little outside our special subject, on which I should add a note to this paragraph. It is sometimes said, "This is all very well, but how about the advance in scholarship, and the consequent deficiency of the Authorised Version in accuracy?" I could ask, whether my translation is ever "accurate"? whether true scholarship does not always require recourse to the original? But this is perhaps too wide. I shall confine myself to saying that no one has ever shown me a passage where any correction, in text or in translation, affects an important question of faith. Even the celebrated *apocryphal* business (*Philipp* ii 6) does not touch that. Further, it is the duty of a properly educated clergy to explain such matters. Nor need any one object to as much addition or correction in marginal or foot notes as may be thought necessary.

<sup>2</sup> In *History of Elizabethan Literature*. The first edition of this (1887) appeared only two years after the completion of the Revisers' work.

<sup>3</sup> These have since presented themselves in a company which, to borrow from Captain Macheath, "I own surprised me." I shall only express a faint hope that this book may help to show the impossibility of "patching" prose.

that required answer I think it not unfair to say that they were all either well-known fanatics of the new-fangled, or persons whose known grudge against, or unfaithfulness to, the Church of England naturally exhaled in carplings at this her greatest work, and the greatest literary work (except the Latin hymns) of any Church in the world, or merely peddling pedants, or a kind of bastard representatives of the old ultra-Protestant view that the Bible is in itself, as a written or printed book, a kind of automatic sacrament, and had therefore better be presented in the most literal fashion possible, or lastly, and strange to say, in some cases confessedly, men deaf to the difference of the harmonic values. That the noblest stuff is worthy of the noblest fashion seems to have occurred to few, that it is impossible to have a nobler fashion than this, hardly to any, that the demand for a new Bible every century, to suit the supposed "needs of the people," is a daring indictment against the education of that people, scarcely to one. It is true that the specious and half-informed ignorance which has now, for nearly half a century, been diffused among the lower classes by board-schools, and, through the contamination of grammar and public schools, among the middle and upper, probably has had this effect. But to meet it by freshly journalised versions from generation to generation is to meet dropsy by giving drink.

But *foin de ces misères-là* ! So long as a single copy of the version of 1611 survives, so long will there be accessible the best words of the best time of English, in the best order, on the best subjects,—so long will the fount be open from which a dozen generations of great English writers, in the most varying times and fashions, of the most diverse temperaments—libertines and virtuous persons, freethinkers and devout, poets and prosemen, laymen and divines—have drawn inspiration and pattern, by which three centuries of readers and hearers have had

---

such as the Authorised Version. The proposal, indeed, reminds me of nothing so much as of Bentley's or Pemberton's proposals for an improved Milton. But the next sentence was not meant to apply to this set of persons

kept before them the prowess and the powers of the English tongue<sup>1</sup>

It must, however, have struck people who, with some literary knowledge, have looked over the list of the English Forty-Seven,<sup>2</sup> that the excellence of their work is certainly not due to the presence among them of many, or even of any, very distinguished men of letters as such. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes has indeed a bright and reverend name, but it is hardly due to any great accomplishment of style on his part. And there is no other on the list (not even "Mr Savile," otherwise Sir Henry) who even approaches him in this respect. The literary tact shown must have been due to an extraordinary diffusion of it among the men of the time. *Per contra*, this diffusion must have concentrated and essentialised itself in others, and we know that, as a matter of fact, it did. Although the strict "Elizabethan" period was past, and although the premature death of Spenser, and of almost all of the first great group of dramatists, had removed some masters who might well have lived into Caroline days, Shakespeare (himself no long-lived man) had ten years to live when the Version was begun, and five when it appeared, Bacon (why has no one contended that Andrewes and the rest were merely "Rosicrucian masks" for him?) was in his glory, and though "Elizabethan" poetry was to show hardly the least falling-off during the actual reign of James, and even during the less unhappy part of his successor's, Elizabethan prose was taking vast and wonderful developments. Raleigh,

<sup>1</sup> A word or two should perhaps be given to a demurrer, sometimes raised even by persons of worship. "You grumble at the Revised Version do you know that similar grumbles were, at the time, made on the Authorised?" Yes, I know it very well, and have always known it. It would be almost enough to answer, "What then? you cannot clear B by saying that the same accusation was formerly brought against A." But there is much more to be said. The time was a marvellous period of creation, it was not such a marvellous period of criticism. And the sole real question is, "Can we prove our charges?" I have given some specimens of proof above. I could add hundreds.

<sup>2</sup> A parallel with the Japanese heroes of the same number, but of another story, would have been a good addition to Mr Verdant Green's famous examination paper.



Greville, Donne had been merely or mostly poets earlier, they now began to write prose almost more beautiful than their verse, while, during the very period of gestation of the Version, two of the Three Strong Ones of purely seventeenth-century prose, Browne (1606) and Milton (1608), were born, and Taylor (1613) was to be but two years belated

In fragments, if hardly in long passages, of the earlier trio the summits are already reached, nay, the style floats at condor-height—"beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men"—above, as it would seem, any point that can be reached by mere climbing and manœuvring. The *altitudo* of such phrasing as that of the three following passages, well known as it ought to be in all cases, is hardly to be reached by any "scansion." Yet by scansion we may, as it were, *trigonometrise* it—estimate what we cannot reach by touch

Ō eloquent, | just, | and mighty | Death<sup>1</sup> | whom none | could  
advise, | thou | hast persuaded, | what none | hath dared, | thou |  
hast done, | and whom all | the world | has flattered, | thou only |  
hast cast out | of the world | and despised | Thou | hast drawn |  
together | all the far stretched | greatness, | all the pride, | cruelty, |  
and ambition | of man, | and covered it | all over | with these | two |  
narrow | words, | Hic | Jacet<sup>1</sup> |

It is well worth notice how here there is actually the strong and almost meticulously arranged balance of Euphuistic antithesis in clause, but how the Euphuistic sing-song and snip-snap is entirely drowned in the marvellous rhythmical flow of the passage, which never trenches upon verse (even the consecutive anapæsts do not, to my ear, produce anything like a metrical effect), how the abundant monosyllabic feet arrest and solemnise the cadence, while the anapæsts themselves, and the not rare

<sup>1</sup> *Jacet*, short in classical Latin, is long in mediæval, and for English purposes

pæons, prevent any dragging or mumbling. There may also be found in it that progression of feet in length or retrogression in shortness, and that combination of different trisyllabics—amphibrach, bacchic (or antibacchic), and anapæst—which I have elsewhere noticed<sup>1</sup>

Here is another and much longer passage, somewhat less of a prose anthem, more continuous, and, as it were, pedestrian (though the feet be rather of angels than of men), but almost equally beautiful, and showing, if not a higher flight, at any rate even greater strength and holding power in the wing

The four | cōmplexions | rēsēble | the four | ēlements, | and  
the seven | āges | of mān, | the seven | planets | Whereof | our  
infāncy | is comparēd | to the Mōon, | in which | we sēem only | to  
live | and grow | as plants

The second age, | to Mercury, | wherein | we are taught | and  
instructed |

Our third age, | to Venus, | the days | of Love, | Desire, | and  
Vanity |

The fourth, | to the Sun, | the strong, | flourishing, | and beauti-  
ful | age | of man's | life

The fifth, | to Mars, | in which | we seek | honour | and victory, |  
and in which | our thoughts | travel | to ambitious | ends

The sixth age | is ascribed | to Jupiter, | in which | we begin | to  
take account | of our times, | judge | of ourselves, | and grow |  
to the p̄fection | of our under|standing

The last | and seventh, | to Saturn, | wherein | our days | are  
sad | and overcast, and in which | we find | by dear | and lāmētable |  
experience, | and by the loss | which can never | be repaired, | that, of  
all | our vain | passions | and affections | past, | the sorrow | only | abid-  
eth | Our attendants | are sicknesses | and variable | infirmities, | and  
by how much | the more we are | accompanied | with plenty, | by  
so much | the mōre grēedily | is our end | desired | Whom when  
Time | hath made | unsociable | to others, | we become | a burden | to  
ourselves | being | of no other | use | than to hold | the riches |  
we have | from our successors | In this time | it is | when we, | for  
the most part | (and never before), | preparē | for our Ētērnal |

<sup>1</sup> As one cannot be too cautious in fending off carps, let it be observed that the question whether Raleigh had "affable familiar ghosts" to help him in the *History* matters here not one straw. If it is not Raleigh's it is some body else's, and that is enough. "*Words, not the man, we sing,*" or rather measure

Habitation, | which | we pass on unto | with many sighs, | groans, | and  
 sad thoughts, | and in the end | (by the workmanship | of Death) |  
 finish | the sorrowful | business | of a wretched | life Towards  
 which | we always | travel, | both sleeping | and waking | Neither  
 have those beloved | companions | of honour | and riches | any  
 power | at all | to hold us | any one day | by the glorious | promise |  
 of entertainments | but | by what crooked | path | soever | we  
 walk, | the same | leadeth on | directly | to the House | of Death,  
 whose doors | lie open | at all hours, | and to all persons |

Here, it will be observed, rhythm opens itself out more, affects larger sweeps, and for that purpose extends, proportionately, the compass of its feet. There are many pæons, and I think, beyond all question, some dochmiacs, where I have marked them. This great foot often has the quivering straightness and onset of a lance in rest at the charge. Note a good "procession" here, "the strong, | flourishing, | and beautiful" (2, 3, 4)

Now try Greville

Greville

For, | Madam, | as nourishment | which feeds | and maintains |  
 our life | is yet | the perfect | pledge | of our | mortality, | so  
 are | these light-moved | passions | true | and assured | notes | of  
 little natures | placed | in what great | estates | soever | Besides |  
 by this practice | of obedience | there grow | many more | com-  
 modities | Since | first | there is no loss | in duty, | so as you  
 must | for the least | win | of yourself | by it, | and either | make it  
 easy<sup>1</sup> | for you to be | unfortunate, | or at least | find | an easy door |  
 and honourable | passage | out of her<sup>1</sup> | intricate | lines | and circles  
 Again, | if it be true | which the philo|sophers hold, | that virtues | and  
 vices, | disagreeing | in all things | else, | yet agree | in this, | that  
 where | there is one | *in posse*, | *in esse* | there are all, | then cannot |  
 any excellent | faculty | of the mind | be alone, | but it must  
 needs | have wisdom, | patience, | piety, | and all other | enemies |  
 of chance | to accompany it, | as against | and amongst | all storms |  
 a calmed | and calming | *mens* | *adepta*

This, it will be observed, is more like Hooker than the Raleigh passages<sup>2</sup> are, indeed, Lord Brooke is of an older

<sup>1</sup> In these two words the Grevillean—that is to say, ultra Elizabethan—"obscurity" may be thought to come in. But there really is no difficulty. "Easy to be unfortunate" = "easy [not distressed] in your evil fortune" (cf. the old jingle, "in your trouble to be troubled," etc.), while "her" is an oblique reference to Fortuna Maligna herself, personified from "unfortunate"

type even than Raleigh, and a much older than Donne. At the same time it anticipates Browne in a certain tendency, not merely to quote Latin, but to give Latinised or archaised colourings and mouldings to words. It is, however, in its leisurely solemnity, extremely beautiful, and the *rise* of the whole, with the final sweep (as of a wave breaking softly on the shore it has reached) of "a calmed and calming *mens adepta*" is hard to surpass or parallel. There is no very great abundance of bulky feet, and hardly any rapidity.<sup>1</sup>

And now for Donne, in a passage than which I hardly know anything more exquisitely rhythmical in the whole range of English from Ælfric to Pater

If some king | of the earth | have so large | an extent | of  
 dominion | in north and south | as that he hath | winter and summer |  
 together | in his dominions, | so large | an extent | east and west |  
 as that he hath | day and night | together | in his dominions, | much  
 more | hath God | mercy | and justice | together | He | brought  
 light | out of darkness, | not | out of a lesser | light, | He can  
 bring | thy summer | out of winter | though | thou have no | spring, |  
 though in the ways | of fortune, | or understanding, | or conscience, |  
 thou have been | benighted | till now, | wintered | and frozen, |  
 clouded | and eclipsed, | damped | and benumbed, | smothered | and  
 stupefied | till now, | now God | comes to thee, | not as in the  
 dawning | of the day, | not as in the bud | of the spring, | but as  
 the sun | at noon | to illustrate | all | shadows, | as the sheaves | in  
 harvest | to fill | all | penuries | All | occasions | invite His |  
 mercies, | and all times | are His | seasons.<sup>2</sup>

Here there could be no change without disaster, except in the possible substitution of some other word for the

<sup>1</sup> The beauty of the amphibrachic, & c. trochaic, ending should also be noticed

<sup>2</sup> The keeping out of metrical effect here is all the more remarkable inasmuch as there are frequent aggregations of similar feet. The reader will perhaps

thrice-repeated "dominion[s]," which to our ears (though apparently neither to French nor to English ones of the seventeenth century) make a disagreeable jingle without emphasis to excuse it "Now," as repeated, is in a very different position, and makes one of the appeals of the piece The Shakespearian magnificence of the diction, such as the throng of kindred but never tautological phrase in "wintered and frozen," etc, and the absolute perfection of rhythmical—never metrical—movement, could not be better wedded It has, I have said, never been surpassed I sometimes doubt whether it has ever been equalled

These three passages, with that from Hooker given towards the close of the last chapter, are something more than foretastes of the famous "organ-tone" which dominates the more elaborate prose of the period 1600-1660, which was represented, for a good many years after the later date, by Milton, Browne, and Glanvill, and the last echo of which, though the concert of it had long ceased, died off, just after the Stuart dynasty itself had come to an end, with Thomas Burnet in 1715 To multiply examples of it is exceedingly tempting, while to one who has any knowledge of the subject and any love of it, to cut them down is both painful and difficult It is, as usual, inevitable that the actual selection should seem too abundant to some readers, and too scanty to others, but, as always, *il faut prendre un parti*

Very different opinions have been held as to the style of Bacon Nobody disputes the opulence of his thought, or, in many passages at least, the close-packed pregnancy of his meaning But it may not unreasonably be made a question whether this very abundance of matter to be stowed has not to some extent affected the fashion of the stowage, and even the trim outline of the vessel I did

---

note the skill with which corresponding words are varied in value—"shadows" and "penur̄ies"—and the members of the "throng" above referred to The double iambs can be disjoined if any one likes, and the molossi—"If some king," "He can bring"—made cretics

not wholly agree with my friend the late Professor Minto's estimate of "large-browed Verulam's" style, but I think he was perfectly right in perceiving a good deal of John Lyly in it. Now we saw that Lyly, for all his deliberate effort at ornateness, frequently sacrificed continuous and fluid rhythm to spurts and jets of suddenly recollected or laboriously prepared conceit, and, above all, paid too much attention to mere antithesis. Bacon is not led astray by fancy similes, but he is by more solid erudition, which he must needs impart by strings of concatenated variations on the same thought, and, above all, by the effort to pack two or more meanings into one word. The famous essay on "Studies" is like a mass of compressed meat or vegetables, sliced out into corresponding pieces of balanced clause. It does not flow like water from a spring; it tumbles out like shreds and scraps out of a bag. If you boiled it up and watered it out with a proper menstruum of auxiliary and illustrative phrase, it might be quite an agreeable thing; as it is, the *prodesse* has got a great deal the better of the *delectare*. In the equally famous "Letter to Lord Burleigh" you get blocks of systematised opposites—"frivolous disputations, confutations, and verborities", "blind experiments, auricular traditions, and impostures", "industrious observations, conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries"—which remind one of Lord Berners and his Preface, and are even more hindering pebbles in the just flow of the discourse. Of course, every now and then (it could not be otherwise with such a writer at such a time) a great phrase may shoot itself up and open itself out in the empyrean of words, like a rocket shedding stars in a dark night. But there are not very many of these, and they are hardly of the quality of those that the reader has seen in the last few pages. Even Minto himself allowed that Bacon "does not seem to have had Hooker's ear for the music of long periods."

On the whole, then, I should further agree with my friend of yore that Bacon really figures in the tree of the plain style, not in that of the ornate, and we may perhaps return to him a little when dealing with his friends and,

in a way, pupils, Jonson and Hobbes. Meanwhile, before coming to the First Three, let us turn to another who is something of a hybrid, if not even of a puzzle, the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

All who have read Burton (and how are they to be Burton half commiserated and half envied who have not!) will be ready to admit—perhaps even to object—that large tracts of the *Anatomy* can hardly be said to have any continuous rhythm at all. The peculiar breathless fashion in which the author heaps quotation upon original writing, and dovetails translation into quotation, and piles up lists of semi-synonyms on casually occurring words and the like, may seem to admit no such thing. There is some truth in this, especially at first sight. Yet it may be counter-objected that separate clauses of these paragraph- (they can hardly be called sentence-) heaps are frequently, if not usually, harmonious enough. And when he chooses (which is far more often than desultory readers may think) no man is a better master, if not of the most ambitious or floriated, still of a very comely and satisfying sentence-architecture. It will not be easy to find, earlier, a better piece of smooth and spirited narrative, seasoned with ironic touches, and arranged so as to read almost as though it were told by word of mouth, than the apologue of the scholar's good luck in "*Moronia pia*, or *Moronia felix*, I know not whether."

But, to your farther content, I'll tell you a tale. In *Moronia pia*, or *Moronia felix*, I know not whether, nor how long since, nor in what cathedral church, a fat prebend fell void. The carcase scarce cold, many suitors were up in an instant. The first had rich friends, a good purse, and he was resolved to outbid any man before he would lose it, every man supposed he should carry it. The second was my Lord Bishop's chaplain (in whose gift it was), and he thought it his due to have it. The third was nobly born, and he meant to get it by his great parents, patrons, and allies. The fourth stood upon his worth, he had newly found out strange mysteries in chemistry, and other rare inventions, which he would detect to the public good. The fifth was a painful preacher, and he was commended by the whole parish where he dwelt, he had all their hands to his certificate. The sixth was the prebendary's son lately deceased, his father died in debt (for it, as they say), left a wife and many poor children. The seventh stood upon fair promises, which

to him and his noble friends had been formerly made for the next place in his lordship's gift. The eighth pretended great losses, and what he had suffered for the church, what pains he had taken at home and abroad, and besides he brought noble men's letters. The ninth had married a kinswoman, and he sent his wife to sue for him. The tenth was a foreign doctor, a late convert, and wanted means. The eleventh would exchange for another, he did not like the former's site, could not agree with his neighbours and fellows upon any terms, he would be gone. The twelfth and last was a suitor in conceit, a right honest, civil, sober man, an excellent scholar, and such a one as lived private in the university, but he had neither means nor money to compass it, besides he hated all such courses, he could not speak for himself, neither had he any friends to solicit his cause, and therefore made no suit, could not expect, neither did he hope for, or look after it. The good bishop, amongst a jury of competitors, thus perplexed, and not yet resolved what to do, or on whom to bestow it, at the last, of his own accord, mere motion, and bountiful nature, gave it freely to the university student, altogether unknown to him but by fame, and, to be brief, the academical scholar had the prebend sent him for a present. The news was no sooner published abroad, but all good students rejoiced, and were much cheered up with it, though some would not believe it, others, as men amazed, said it was a miracle, but one amongst the rest thanked God for it, and said, "*Nunc juvat tandem studiosum esse, et Deo integro corde servire*." You have heard my tale, but, alas! it is but a tale, a mere fiction, 'twas never so, never like to be, and so let it rest.

Nor is he destitute of the subtler graces. But, in giving an example of them, we may also give one of a fault which undoubtedly does beset the greater writers of the time, which is flagrant in Milton and Clarendon, and which, perhaps more than anything else, brought about the almost organised revolt of Plainness at the Restoration. This fault is not exactly what it has been called, even by so great a critic as Coleridge, even by so accurate a writer as Minto, a looseness in "grammar" or in "syntax." Strictly speaking, English has reduced its grammar to the lowest terms, and its syntax is largely, if not wholly, "according to the meaning." It is a neglect of the higher *taxes* or arrangement of sentence and paragraph, especially in the direction of continuing sentences where they ought to leave off. Take the example referred to.

I may not deny but that there is some profitable meditation, contemplation, and kind of solitariness, to be embraced, which the



fathers so highly commended—Hierom, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Austin, in whole tracts, which Petrarch, Erasmus, Stella, and others, so much magnify in their books—a paradise, an heaven on earth, if it be used aright, good for the body, and better for the soul, as many of those old monks used it, to divine contemplations, as Simulus a courtier in Adrian's time, Diocletian the emperor, retired themselves, etc., in that sense, *Vatia solus scit vivere*, Vatia lives alone, which the Romans were wont to say, when they commended a country life, or to the bettering of their knowledge, as Democritus, Cleanthes, and those excellent philosophers, have ever done, to sequester themselves from the tumultuous world, or, as in Pliny's villa Laurentana, Tully's Tusculan, Jovius' study, that they might better *vacare studis et Deo*, serve God and follow their studies Methinks, therefore, our too zealous innovators were not so well advised in that general subversion of abbeys and religious houses, promiscuously to fling down all. They might have taken away those gross abuses crept in amongst them, rectified such inconveniencies, and not so far to have raved and raged against those fair buildings, and everlasting monuments of our forefathers' devotion, consecrated to pious uses. Some monasteries and collegiate cells might have been well spared, and their revenues otherwise employed, here and there one, in good towns or cities at least, for men and women of all sorts and conditions to live in, to sequester themselves from the cares and tumults of the world, that were not desirous or fit to marry, or otherwise willing to be troubled with common affairs, and know not well where to bestow themselves, to live apart in, for more conveniency, good education, better company sake, to follow their studies (I say) to the perfection of arts and sciences, common good, and, as some truly devoted monks of old had done, freely and truly to serve God for these men are neither solitary, nor idle, as the poet made answer to the husbandman in Æsop, that objected idleness to him, he was never so idle as in his company, or that Scipio Africanus in Tully, *numquam minus solus, quam quum solus, numquam minus otiosus, quam quum esset otiosus*, never less solitary, than when he was alone, never more busy, than when he seemed to be most idle.

Here the first passage (you can hardly call it a sentence) is an example of the "heaps" above referred to, though it is rather less tangled than some, and in particular has fewer quotations in foreign tongues. The middle passage from "Methinks" as far as "tumults of the world" is not merely good, it is delicious. The rhythm more than suits, it positively heightens, the sense in "those fair buildings and everlasting monuments of our forefathers' devotion, consecrated to pious uses." But when he arrived at "world" Burton unluckily found that

he had got more to say, and without troubling himself on the point whether a mere tack-on would not spoil the fair round cadence of his phrase, he continues to say it reckless of the, in English, abrupt and obscure relativity of "that," careless of the fact that you have got to wander back three lines to find the subject of "know," and perfectly ready to make a fresh tack of hardly less violent afterthought, and yet another, and yet another still, at "to follow," at "for," and at "or that" It is no sufficient answer that, as was allowed above, most of these jointings are harmonious enough, and well enough proportioned, in themselves The *culpa*, and something rather more than the *minima culpa*, is the entire neglect to achieve that "music of long periods" which was recently spoken of

Of the three writers who, on the whole, stand at the head of the seventeenth-century division of their fellows in prose, if not at the head of all English prose-writers, Browne (born 1605) was a slightly older man than Milton (1608), and nearly a decade older than Taylor (1613) But the differences, even in years, are not such as to insist upon chronological order in this respect, and those in other respects do strongly suggest violation of it The order, not merely in perfection of prose, but, as it seems to me, in kind of it, and the order even of logical if not of sheer historic time—taking the ascending line—is Milton, Taylor, Browne, and in this I propose to consider them.

Milton is not only the oldest-fashioned of the three, but he is also by far the most unequal His inequality, which is notorious and undeniable, is indeed so great that some have gone to the point of altogether denying him first-rate merit as a prose writer My late friend, and sometime chief, the Rev John Oates,<sup>1</sup> Headmaster of

<sup>1</sup> Mr Oates was an intimate friend of Mark Pattison's, and if anybody can imagine Pattisonian flour made up into dough with milk instead of gall, its yeast unsoured by any religious convulsion, and soft instead of hard baked, the result would not be very unlike the genial personage under whom I spent six not unmerry years *là bas, dans l'île*, long ago

Elizabeth College, Guernsey—a scholar and master of English, as of the classics, whom his professional occupations, and perhaps (I may say it without offence or disloyalty to his memory) a certain not unscholarly indolence of temperament, kept from making the mark in literature which he might have made,—once wrote me an expostulation, long and at least as serious as his humorous temperament would allow, on the estimate which I had made of Milton's prose in my *History of Elizabethan Literature*. And it is quite certain, not only that Milton is seldom at his best, but that, when you take him at *not* his best, he is often a mass of faults, while he sometimes allows them entrance (as he never does in his verse) at that best itself.

The causes of Milton's shortcomings as a prose writer are pretty numerous, and out of them and their examples very nearly the whole indictment against the prose of the earlier seventeenth century could be drawn up, except the counts as to excessive ornament, which would have to be filled in from Taylor. They were indeed partly what it is the fashion to call "temperamental"—the commendable earnestness and the most discommendable ill-temper of the man, unchecked by humour, unrestrained by that unfeigned reverence for the Muse which redeems even such gratuitous flings as the famous speech of St Peter in *Lycidas*, leading him constantly to substitute an angry splutter of abuse for a finished invective. Passing from the moral to the mental sphere, they were, as in both his great compeers, and in most of the men of the time, associated with, or directly brought about by, his great learning and the extraordinary fulness of his mind, which led him to cram his sentences with quotation, argument, parenthesis, and every figured or unfigured trick of eking and bolstering out sentence and paragraph. But the greatest snare of all was the same which has been noticed in Burton—the fatal habit of jointing on relative and epexegetic clauses. That much of this, if not the whole of it, comes from the habit of writing to some extent, and thinking even when not writing, in Latin, is extremely

probable if not positively certain. But, as we shall see, it sometimes goes near to spoil the finest passages of all, and constantly impairs the staple of his style and rhythm. I do not know that I can give a better instance of this than that which I selected a quarter of a century ago in one of the previous handlings of this subject referred to in the Preface<sup>1</sup>

Let us take, however, three of the most famous passages of all—the “Search for Dead Truth” in the *Areopagitica*, the account of his education in romance from the *Apology*, and the parallel of himself in poetry and prose from the *Reasons of Church Government*. The first is practically faultless ‡

Truth | indeed | came once | into the world | with her divine |  
 master, | and was a per|fect shape | most glorious | to look on | but  
 when | he ascended, | and his apostles | after him | were laid | asleep,  
 then straight | arose | a wicked | race | of deceivers, | who, | as that  
 story goes | of the Egyptian | Typhon | with his | conspirators, | how  
 they dealt | with the good | Osiris, | took | the virgin | Truth,<sup>2</sup> | hewed |  
 her lovely | form<sup>3</sup> | into a thousand | pieces, | and scattered them | to  
 the four winds. From that time | ever | since, | the sad | friends | of  
 Truth, | such as durst | appear, | imitating | the careful | search |  
 that Isis | made | for the mangled | body | of Osiris, | went up | and  
 down gathering up | limb | by limb<sup>2</sup> | still | as they could find them |  
 We have not | yet found | them all, | lords and commons, | nor  
 ever | shall do, | till her Master's | second | coming, | he shall bring |  
 together | every joint | and member, | and shall mould them | into  
 an immortal | feature | of loveliness | and perfection | Suffer not |  
 these licensing | prohibitions | to stand | at every | place of | oppor-  
 tunity | forbidding | and disturbing | them | that continue | seeking, |  
 that continue | to do | our obsequies | to the torn | body | of our  
 martyred | saint

We boast | our light, | but if | we look not | wisely | on the sun

<sup>1</sup> “But if his, rear and flanks be not impaled, if his backdoor be not secured by the rigid licenser, but that a bold book may now and then come forth and give the assault to some of his old collections in their trenches, it will concern him then to keep waking, to stand in watch, to get good guards and sentinels about his received opinions, to walk the round and counter round with his fellow inspectors, fearing lest any of his flock be seduced, *who thus also would be better instructed, better exercised and disciplined.*” Had this sentence terminated at “seduced” all had been well, but the after thought ruins it ‡

<sup>2</sup> These groups give occasion for a warning which will apply throughout. They may, if any one likes, be respectively combined into two di iambbs and a cætic or molossus, as best pleases the ear

itself, | it smites us | into darkness | Who | can discern | those  
 planets | that are oft | combust, | and those stars | of brightest |  
 magnitude | that rise | and set | with the sun, | until the op|posite  
 motion | of their orbs | bring them | to such | a place | in the  
 firmament, | where they may be seen | evening | or morning?  
 The light | which we have gained | was given us, | not | to be  
 ever | staring on, | but by it | to discover | onward things | more  
 remote | from our knowledge | It is not | the unfrocking | of a  
 priest, | the unmitring | of a bishop, | and the removing | him from  
 off | the presbyterian | shoulders, | that will make us | a happy |  
 nation | no, | if other things | as great | in the church, | and in  
 the rule | of life | both e|conomical | and political, | be not looked  
 into | and reformed, | we have looked | so long | upon the blaze |  
 that Zuinglius | and Calvin | have beacons | up to us, | that we are  
 stark | blind

On this at least the lofty encomium of the Master of Peterhouse is not extravagant That Milton's is "the most extraordinary literary prose, and the most wonderful poet's prose, embodied in English literature," is hardly a hyperbole here

This particular passage, it will be observed, goes on, for at least some sentences, almost or quite as well as it has begun, and the first half of the second paragraph is admirable The case is not quite the same with the next piece

Next (for hear me out now, readers), that I may tell ye whither my younger feet wandered, I betook me among those lofty fables and romances, which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knight-hood founded by our victorious kings, and from hence had in renown over all Christendom There I read it in the oath of every knight, that he should defend to the expense of his best blood, or of his life, if it so befell him, the honour and chastity of virgin or matron, from whence even then I learned what a noble virtue chastity sure must be, to the defence of which so many worthies, by such a dear adventure of themselves, had sworn And if I found in the story afterward, any of them, by word or deed, breaking that oath, I judged it the same fault of the poet, as that which is attributed to Homer, to have written indecent things of the gods Only this my mind gave me, that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath, ought to be born a knight, nor needed to expect the gilt spur, or the laying of a sword upon his shoulder to stir him up both by his counsel and his arms, to secure and protect the weakness of any attempted chastity So that even these books, which to many others have been the fuel of wantonness and loose living, I cannot think how, unless by divine indulgence, proved to me so many

incitements, as you have heard, to the love and steadfast observation of that virtue which abhors the society of bordelloes

Thus, from the laureat fraternity of poets, riper years and the ceaseless round of study and reading led me to the shady spaces of philosophy, but chiefly to the divine volumes of Plato, and his equal Xenophon where, if I should tell ye what I learnt of chastity and love, I mean that which is truly so, whose charming cup is only virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy (the rest are cheated with a thick intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love's name, carries about), and how the first and chiefest office of love begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, knowledge and virtue

Here, in the last of the two paragraphs, you get the Miltonic "falling-off" The "romance" paragraph is faultless, the first part of the "philosophy" one, down to "chastity and love" bears it company, then from "I mean" to "about" the writer loses step, blunders about for several lines like a player at blindman's buff, and with difficulty steadies himself for the run in at the close

The third, except in a few touches, is less beautiful, but it is interesting as showing that Milton was quite capable, when he chose, of gearing most complicated sentences together without losing thread of construction or concert of rhythm The fact is that at this time (for it was the earliest written of the three) he had not "got ruffled by fighting," though he hardly had a subject admitting of the display of his greatest art

Lastly, I should not choose this manner of writing, wherein knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account, but of my left hand And though I shall be foolish in saying more to this purpose, yet, since it will be such a folly, as wisest men go about to commit, having only confessed and so committed, I may trust with more reason, because with more folly, to have courteous pardon For although a poet, soaring in the high reason of his fancies, with his garland and singing robes about him, might, without apology, speak more of himself than I mean to do, yet for me, sitting here below in the cool element of prose, a mortal thing among many readers of no empyreal conceit, to venture and divulge unusual things of myself, I shall petition to the gentler sort, it may not be envy to me I must say, therefore, that after I had for my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father (whom God recompense!), been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers, both at home and

at the schools, it was found that whether aught was imposed me by them that had the overlooking, or betaken to of mine own choice in English, or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly by this latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live. But much later in the private academies of Italy, whither I was favoured to resort, perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty or thereabout (for the manner is, that every one must give some proof of his wit and reading there), met with acceptance above what was looked for, and other things, which I had shifted in scarcity of books and conveniences to patch up amongst them, were received with written encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps, I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intense study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die.

It can scarcely be necessary to dwell much on the merits of Milton's exertations in what he calls—with an irony which the usual grudging fairy at his birth had rendered him incapable of appreciating—"the *cool* element of prose." Those who cannot taste them must either be congenitally incapable of doing so, or else, like the excellent critic and scholar whom I have mentioned above, must be so shocked and disgusted by the faults which accompany them as to be temporarily disqualified. The *largior aether*—the peculiar vastness and spaciousness—of the verse is here hardly limited at all in its more extensive and paragraphic deliverances, and actually widened as regards the smaller—the sentences, clauses, and prose-lines. The kind is definitely oratorical—to appreciate it fully you must, as again in the case of the verse, "read it aloud to yourself." Nor is it superfluous to observe that in such reading, and still more in actual oral delivery, many of the minor difficulties of construction disappear under any satisfactory kind of elocution. The selection of word and phrase has all the cunning of the poet; the further ordonnance of clause and cadence enlists as well the vehemence, the *dévotes*, of the orator, and the whole at its best floats and sweeps itself off in such

volume as that of the magnificent description of the Armada

That we may still | remember | in our solemn | thanksgivings  
| how, | for us, | the northern | ocean, | even | to our frozen | Thule,  
was scattered | with the proud shipwrecks | of the Spanish | Armada,<sup>1</sup>

as the whole tissue of the "Search after Truth," and as the almost awestruck celebration of the "lofty fables and romances"

Yet the faults themselves, from our special as from other points of view, can only be denied or blinked by an equally uncritical partisanship or state of intellectual bribery. First and foremost, and (as has been pointed out) not less destructive of rhythm in sound than of coherency in sense, is the unlucky practice of tagging and tailing on. Just before the great Truth passage (for an additional instance) there is another, inferior enough, it must be confessed, in tone and temper, but made worse by a fault of this kind

There is yet behind of what I purposed to lay open, the incredible loss and detriment that this plot of licensing puts us to, more than if some enemy at sea should stop up all our havens, and ports, and creeks, it hinders and retards the importation of our richest merchandise, truth nay, it was first established and put in practice by anti christian malice and mystery on set purpose to extinguish, if it were possible, the light of reformation, and to settle falsehood, little differing from that policy wherewith the Turk upholds his Alcoran, by the prohibiting of printing. It is not denied, but gladly confessed, we are to send our thanks and vows to Heaven, louder than most of nations, for that great measure of truth which we enjoy, especially in those main points between us and the pope, with his appurtenances the prelates but he who thinks we are to pitch our tent here, and have attained the utmost prospect of reformation, that the mortal glass wherein we contemplate can show us, till we come to beatific vision, that man by this very opinion declares, that he is yet far short of truth

Here "the Turk and his Alcoran" are very little wanted—are, in fact, a quite evident afterthought of the writer's. And as an afterthought he leaves them, without

<sup>1</sup> This dwindling of dochmiac, pæon, and amphibrach has been noticed before, and is, indeed, one of the most definitely noticeable schemes of ending.



troubling himself either to bring out, as he easily might, by the slightest alteration and addition, that the Turkish policy is the censorship policy carried to "Thorough," or, at no greater cost, to mould his actual addition into any rhythm consistent and coherent with the preceding clauses. It is, in fact, a sort of aside—a deliberate excrescence in sound as in thought. I should not myself object, on our present score (though many people would), to yet another passage<sup>1</sup> a little farther on, though the argument seems to me singularly silly and unpractical. For though the first sentence is complicated, it runs unbroken in sense and cadence, and a fit reader (let the others perish!) will get to the end of it without stumbling-block to his mind's feet or discord to his mind's ear. But in the second, mark how the sentence faints and squanders itself out in sense and rhythm alike, merely to bring in those here most superfluous, if intrinsically distinguished, persons, Proteus and Micaiah.

A survey of the selected examples will, I think, show that Milton uses a very composite arrangement of shorter and longer feet, which produces a definitely sustained level, or very flat curve, of general rhythm in the clause and sentence. There is much less of rise and fall in him than in Hooker; he shoots up at once, and, as is familiarly said, "stays there," unless he is brought down by one of his unlucky disarrangements of over-lap. I do not seem to find in him the large number of monosyllabic feet

<sup>1</sup> "When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scattered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument, for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of truth. For who knows not that truth is strong, next to the Almighty, she needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious, those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power—give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as the old Proteus did, who spake oracles only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes, except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micaiah did before Ahab, until she be adjoined into her own likeness."

which distinguishes some of the best English prose, though, of course, he often starts with one to launch him up with its necessary consequent of pause, as in the "Truth|" of the passage so often referred to. Milton must inevitably have been fond of Plato, and there are considerable resemblances between the styles of the two men. And if this seem to any one (it would to me have seemed at one time) a reflection on the equal excellence of the Greek, let us remember that ancient critics by no means regarded their Plato in that light, but spoke of him<sup>1</sup> as a mixture of faults and merits, a libertine wanderer from the chaste to the meretricious and so forth—exactly as some are wont to characterise our great seventeenth-century prose-men.

There have been few differences of opinion as to the high, if not highest, place occupied by Jeremy Taylor as a virtuoso in English prose harmony, though the absolute merits of his style, considered apart from mere sound, and the necessary minimum of sense-connection therewith, have by no means been matters of such general agreement. The masculine appreciation of South—himself, as we shall see, no mean master of rhythm—revolted early at the repetitions of "So have I seen" and the over-poetic diction of "fringes of the north star." And while recent, or comparatively recent, fancy for extreme ornateness has again raised estimates of Taylor, there are those who can hardly follow Coleridge and De Quincey in regarding him, not merely as a great word-master, but as a thinker to match. We, however, are only concerned with the above restricted *pacta conventa*—which, however, still leave a little ground for argument, or at least analysis, as to the exact character of Taylor's harmony, and the means whereby it may be thought to have been attained. Two passages, practically three, of some length, shall be given and scanned, nor is it perhaps superfluous to remark that Taylor, like Hooker, "scans himself" (in more than the French sense of the reflexive) with singular inevitableness.

<sup>1</sup> Both Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Longinus speak thus

"Prayer<sup>1</sup> | is the peace | of our spirit, | the stillness | of our Exa  
 thoughts, | the evenness | of recollection, | the seat | of meditation, |  
 the rest | of our cares | and the calm | of our tempest | Prayer |  
 is the issue | of a quiet | mind, | of untroubled | thoughts, it is the |  
 daughter | of charity | and the sister | of meekness, | and he | that  
 prays | to God | with an angry—that is a troubled | and dis-  
 composed—spirit, | is like him | that retires | into a battle | to  
 meditate | and sets up | his closet | in the outquarters | of an army |  
 and chooses | a frontier | garrison | to be wise in | Anger | is  
 a perfect | alienation | of the mind | from prayer, | and therefore |  
 is contrary | to that attention | which presents | our prayers | in a  
 right | line | to God | For so | have I seen | a lark | rising |  
 from his bed | of grass, | soaring | upwards | and singing | as he  
 rises | and hopes | to get | to Heaven | and climb | above | the  
 clouds, | but the poor bird | was beaten back | with the loud |  
 sighings | of an eastern | wind | and his motion | made irregular |  
 and inconstant, | descending | more | at every breath | of the  
 tempest | than it could | recover | by the vibration | and frequent |  
 weighing | of his wings, | till the little | creature | was forced | to  
 sit down | and pant | and stay | till the storm | was over, | and  
 then | it made | a prosperous | flight | and did rise | and sing | as  
 if it had learned | music | and motion | from an angel | as he passed |  
 sometimes | through the air | about | his ministries | here below |  
 So | is the prayer | of a good | man, | when his affairs | have  
 required | business, | and his business | was matter | of discipline, |  
 and his discipline | was to pass | upon a sinning | person, | or had |  
 a design | of charity, | his duty | met | with infirmities | of a man |  
 and anger | was its instrument, | and the instrument | became

<sup>1</sup> Some people prefer "Prayer" in this sense as a monosyllable I do not, but they can take it or make it so

stronger | than the prime | agent | and raised | a tempest | and  
 overruled | the man, | and then | his prayer | was broken | and his  
 thoughts | troubled

For so | an impure | vapour |—begotten | of the slime | of the  
 earth | by the fevers | and adulterous | heats | of an intemperate<sup>1</sup> |  
 summer | sun, | striving | by the ladder | of a mountain | to climb |  
 to heaven | and rolling | into various | figures | by an uneasy, |  
 unfixed | revolution, | and stopped | at the middle | region | of the  
 air, | being thrown | from his pride | and attempt | of passing |  
 towards the seat | of the stars |—turns into | an unwholesome |  
 flame | and, like | the breath | of hell, | is confined | into a prison |  
 of darkness | and a cloud, | till it breaks | into diseases, | plagues |  
 and mildews, | stinks | and blastings | So | is the prayer | of  
 an unchaste | person | It strives | to climb | the battlements | of  
 heaven, | but because | it is a flame | of sulphur | salt | and bitumen, |  
 and was kindled | in the dishon(ou)rable<sup>2</sup> | regions | below, | derived |  
 from Hell | and contrary | to God, | it cannot | pass forth | to the  
 element | of love, | but ends | in barrenness | and murmurs, |  
 fantastic | expectations | and trifling | imaginative | confidences, |  
 and they | at last | end | in sorrows | and despair

We are | as water, | weak | and of no | consistence, | always |  
 descending, | abiding | in no certain place, | unless | we are de-  
 tained | with violence, | and every | little | breath of | wind | makes  
 us rough | and tempestuous | and troubles | our faces, | every |  
 trifling | accident | discomposes us, | and as the face | of the  
 waters | wafting | in a storm, | so wrinkles itself | that it makes |  
 upon its forehead | furrows | deep | and hollow | like a grave, | so

<sup>1</sup> A dochmiac by grace slur—"intemperate"

<sup>2</sup> Slurred again to dochmiac—"the dishon'able"

dō | our great | and little | cares | and trifles | first make | the  
 wrinkles | of old age, | and then | they dig | a grave for us , | and  
 there is | in nature | nothing | so contemptible, | but it may meet  
 us | in such | circumstances | that it may be | too hard for us | in  
 our weaknesses , | and the sting | of a bee | is a weapon | sharp  
 enough | to pierce | the finger | of a child | or the lip | of a man , |  
 and those creatures | which nature | hath left | without weapons | yet  
 are they armed | sufficiently | to vex | those parts | of man | which  
 are left | defenceless | and obnoxious | to a sunbeam, | to the rough-  
 ness | of a sour grape, | to the unevenness<sup>1</sup> | of a gravel | stone |  
 to the dust | of a wheel, | or the unwholesome | breath | of a  
 star | looking | awry | upon a sinner |

Of the beauty of all this there can assuredly be little dispute, and it is only fair to draw special attention to the way in which the Taylorian *anacolutha* (which *do* exist) and the Taylorian sentence-length (in which he almost vies with Clarendon) are nearly always so cunningly adjusted as neither to give the jolts and jars in sound, nor to produce the tangle and obscurity of sense, which are too frequent in Clarendon himself, in Milton, and in others. One reason—a little, but only a very little, extraneous to our strictest province—is that Taylor affects illustration and description very much more than argument or narration, and that, as Mr Ruskin (the parallel has been used before and may be again) has finally shown, illustration and description of a sufficiently panoramic kind are capable, like panorama itself, of almost indefinite prolongation without confusion. But it would be exceedingly unfair not to count to him for virtue his avoidance of the breaks of rhythm into which, even

<sup>1</sup> Slurred easily into a *dochimac*, according to the pronunciations of the time, either as “to th unevenness,” “to the uneve’ness,” or “to the une’enness,” all of which were, *at the time*, tolerable and likely. Later, as we shall see, *unslurred*, but slightly quantified, six or perhaps even seven syllabled groups are met with, but I doubt if Taylor would have pronounced these as such.

in such matter, most of his great contemporaries would certainly have fallen

It will further be observed (and it is worth while to turn back specially to the Hooker passages to see it) that, as a necessary consequence of this long-breathedness (for *long-windedness* has an ill-name), his rhythm is very much more various, more polycentred, than Hooker's. Instead of one, not indeed monotonous but somewhat regular, soar and stoop in each sentence, there is, in the groups of clauses which may be taken as the equivalents of an ordinary sentence, a perpetual unflurried flutter—a soft whirr and rustling of gentle rise and gentler fall—like that of the golden and silver wings rising and floating and falling in Christina Rossetti's poem

It follows that the rhythmical *kola* in Jeremy exhibit the most extreme and artful variation, and that he uses the utmost liberty of foot-extension or shortening. I do not think that I have gone wrong, or exposed my system to a charge of inconsistency, by allowing slurred dochmiacs of six or even seven possible syllables<sup>1</sup>. For it must be remembered that Taylor's prose is nothing if not *spoken* prose, and the liberty of slur or even (saving his Right Reverence) "patter" in speech is not only great at all times, but, if carefully and not too lavishly used, one of the most cherished and effective devices of the orator<sup>2</sup>. Other noticeable things in him are the frequency, boldness, and success with which he uses sequence of the same feet, while avoiding at the same time any offensively metrical effect. I do not say that there is no blank verse in him. It is practically impossible—unless a writer goes through his work deliberately and artificially breaks them up—to avoid in English such things as—

<sup>1</sup> We shall see that they recur in the less varied, but equally oratorical, prose of the Augustans

<sup>2</sup> Other nations, of course, use it much more than we do. I remember, the first time that I heard M. Renan speak, wondering whether I knew any French at all—so apparently impossible was it to follow his runs of huddled slur syllables with a crash of emphasis on the last. One got used to it before long, and indeed Frenchmen have since told me that Renan was exceptionally given to the trick. But English speakers often take the same liberty, though to a less extent.

Unless we are detained with violence,

or

It strives to climb the battlements of Heaven<sup>1</sup>

But there are very much fewer than there are in Ruskin, and those which are found are even more cunningly bewitched into silence, muffled and disguised so that they pass even a vigilant sentinel-ear

This freedom from confusion of the harmonies may have been partly due—both in Taylor's case and in that, to which we shall come shortly, of Browne—to the fact that the inclination of both for verse was, for men of their time, surprisingly small. Both have left a little, but very little, and of a quality which, though in neither case contemptible, is in neither worthy of special remark. How thoroughly Jeremy was a prose-man, despite his love for poetic diction and his extraordinary plastic power over words, could not be better shown than in the above-quoted phrase, "And it 1ose | and sung | as if it had learned | music | and motion | from an angel | as he passed | through the air | about | his ministries | here below." The form is as musical as the substance, but it is utterly prose-music—it is much if there is a sort of underhum of Ionic *a minore*,<sup>2</sup> which, as I have endeavoured to show elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> is doubtfully an English *metre* at all, and which itself can only be made out by rather outrageous and unnatural handling in verse, but which is a very charm and spell in prose.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the greatest of these three—if not in all ways, yet certainly in those which we are more specially treading—

<sup>1</sup> Observe, too, the happy boldness with which he allows himself runs of iambs, "And like | the breath | of hell," defeating the blank verse effect by the succession of metrically incompatible feet

<sup>2</sup> "And it rose and | sung as if it | had learned music" or "-sic and motion | from an angel | as he passed through." Pæons, as usual, optional

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *Historical Manual of English Prosody*, pp. 285, 286

<sup>4</sup> Those who like to venture upon the perilous and aleatory task of assigning special foot combinations as sure rhythm getters, will find in the above scanned passages some tempting matter. I point and pass

is Browne. His greatness is indeed rather in the sentence than in the paragraph, though he has paragraphs of unsurpassed architecture, and he may seem sometimes to rely, more exclusively than he should, on sheer balance for his effects. He has less *virtuosity* than Taylor, and I should not make on him the note that I made above as to "pattern" combinations. On one of the counts of Coleridge's charge against him—disorderly syntax—he is in fact much more guiltless than either Taylor or Milton, it is almost impossible to find in him the cumbrous and jolting *anacolutha* which constantly mar both the sense and the sound of the one, and which are rather disguised and carried off than actually prevented by the smoother-flowing current of the other. Even as regards corruption of vocabulary (another Coleridgean accusation) I doubt whether I myself, a good many years ago,<sup>1</sup> did not make unwise concessions in admitting exceptions to Browne on the score of Latinism and of catachresis of words. I had not then studied the strictly rhythmical side of prose as I have since. I shall not, even now, say that Browne's peculiarities in this respect are always justifiable on this score, or indeed on any, but I have made sure in a great many cases, and I believe I might, with a sufficient expenditure of time, make sure in the majority, that when he substitutes "clarity" for "clearness," when he pours upon the vulgar head the perhaps to it doubtfully precious balms of "abbreviature" and "exantlation," even when he has such traps for the unwary as "equable" in the sense of "equitable," and "gratitude" in that of "a grateful person," he is not only manipulating the *xena*—the "strange" words which strike the sense—in permissible and laudable fashion, but is actually and deliberately adding to the sonority and harmony of his phrase.

It will almost or quite follow from the two points just indicated—Browne's special attention to the sentence rather than to the paragraph, though not omitting or neglecting this, and his further attention to the particular

<sup>1</sup> In my *History of Elizabethan Literature* (First Edition, 1887).



though not exactly "lonely" word—that his rhythmical attraction, as well as other parts or qualities of his style, is singularly pervading. The Tyrian purple of Milton's best passages suits the banners of a very king of prose, but these banners issue forth irregularly and in a terribly undisciplined fashion. Taylor mixes and applies his colours far more deliberately, but he exercises considerable economy, not indeed in the mixing but in the application. Browne's style, on the other hand, is shot with a peculiar iridescence throughout, though he appor-  
tions the degree of its brightness to some extent accord-  
ing to the subject, giving less of it in the business-like  
miscellany of the *Pseudodoxia*, and the central miniature  
cyclopædia of curiosities in the *Garden of Cyrus*,<sup>1</sup> than in  
the beginning and close of this latter, in most of the  
*Religio*, and in the whole of *Hydriotaphia*. In *Christian*  
*Morals* and the *Letter to a Friend* we have the secrets  
 of loom and dye-vat curiously exposed midway—the  
 materials are all there, but the actual processes themselves  
 are in different stages of perfection, "forwarded" but not  
 "finished"

It follows from these considerations that Browne requires slightly different treatment from most if not from all other figures in this book. The world-famous passage in *Urn Burial*, "Now since these dead bones," is known in its first half-dozen lines probably to thousands who do not know the context at all, and the paragraph of which it forms part, perhaps to hundreds who do not know much or anything more of Browne. But, as a matter of fact, the entire chapter in which this occurs is an unbroken  
 and, at most, spaced and rested symphony, and, at the risk of disgusting the reader, I shall attempt the feat (some may say the outrage) of scanning the entire

<sup>1</sup> Yet in this there are some especial magnificences, as thus "And therefore Providence hath arched and paved the great house of the world, with colours of mediocrity, that is, blue and green, above and below the sight, moderately | terminating | the acies | of the eye", or the splendid section beginning, "Light that makes things seen, makes some things invisible," and ending, "The sun | itself | is but the dark | *simulacrūm*, | and light | but the shadow, | of God"

rhapsody by division, and in some parts by actual quantification. It will give us more to go upon, in the final attempt to reach some systematic conclusions, than many shorter ones could. But I shall also hope to add at least one paragraph-piece, and a large number of isolated sentences and phrases, to illustrate the magnificence of the whole. The results may be but as the results of "arming" deep-sea leads, but those are often valuable, and so may be these

Now since these dead bones | have already | out lasted | the  
living ones | of Methuselah, | and in a yard | under ground, | and  
thin | walls | of clay, | out-worn | all the strong | and specious |  
buildings | above it, | and quietly | rested | under the drums | and  
trampings | of three | conquests, | what Prince | can promise |  
such | diuturnity | unto his reliques, | or might not | gladly | say,

*Sic ego componi versus in ossa velim*

Time, | which antiquates | Antiquities | and hath an art | to make  
dust | of all things, | hath yet spared | these minor | monuments |

In vain | we hope | to be known | by open | and 'visible | con-  
servatories, | when to be unknown | was the means | of their | con-  
tinuation | and obscurity | their | protection | If they died | by  
violent | hands, | and were thrust | into their urns, | these bones |  
become | considerable, | and some old | philosophers | would honour  
them, | whose souls | they conceived | most pure, | which were thus |  
snatched | from their bodies, | and to retain | a stranger | propen-  
sion | unto them, | whereas | they weariedly | left | a languishing |  
corpse, | and with faint | desires | of re-union | If they fell | by  
long | and aged | decay, | yet wrapt up | in the bundle | of time, |  
they fall into | indistinction, | and make | but one blot | with infants  
If | we begin | to die | when we live, | and long life | be but | a  
prolongation | of death, | our life | is a sad | composition, | we  
live | with death, | and die not | in a moment | How many pulses |  
made up | the life | of Methuselah, | were work | for Archimedes |  
common | counters | sum up | the life | of Moses | his man | Our  
days | become | considerable | like petty | sums | by minute | ac-  
cumulations, | where numerous | fractions | make up | but small |  
round numbers, | and our days | of a span long | make not | one  
little | finger

If the nearness | of our last | necessity, | brought a nearer | con-  
formity | into it, | there were | a happiness | in hoary hairs, | and

no | calamity | in half senses    But the long | habit | of living |  
 indisposeth us | for dying , | when avarice | makes us | the sport | of  
 death , | when even | David | grew politicly | cruel , | and Solomon |  
 could hardly | be said | to be the wisest | of men | But many | are  
 too early | old , | and before | the date | of age | Adversity |  
 stretcheth | our days , | misery | makes | Alcmena's | nights , and  
 time | hath no wings | unto it | But the most | tedious | being | is  
 that | which can unwish itself , | content | to be nothing , | or never |  
 to have been , | which was beyond | the malcontent | of Job , | who  
 cursed not | the day | of his life , | but his | nativity | content | to  
 have so far | been , | as to have | a title | to future | being , |  
 although | he had lived | here | but in an hidden | state | of life ,  
 and as it were | an abortion |

What Song | the Syrens | sang , | or what name | Achilles |  
 assumed | when he hid himself | among women , | though puzzling |  
 questions , | are not | beyond all | conjecture | What time | the  
 persons | of these | ossuaries | entered | the famous | nations | of the  
 dead , | and slept | with princes | and counsellors , | might admit | a  
 wide | solution | But who were the | proprietaries | of these bones , |  
 or what bodies | these ashes | made up , | were a question | above |  
 antiquarianism | Not | to be resolved | by man | nor easily | perhaps |  
 by spirits , | except | we consult | the provincial | Guardians | or  
 tutelary | Observators | Had they made | as good | provision | for  
 their names | as they have done | for their reliques , | they had not |  
 so grossly | erred | in the art of | perpetuation | But to subsist | in  
 bones , | and be but | pyramidally | extant , | is a fallacy | in duration |  
 Vain ashes , | which in | the oblivion | of names , | persons , | times ,  
 and sexes , | have found | unto themselves , | a fruitless | continua-  
 tion , | and only | arise | unto late | posterity , | as emblems | of  
 mortal | vanities , | antidotes | against pride , | vain-gloiy , | and  
 madding | vices | Pagan | vain glories | which thought | the world |  
 might last | for ever , | had encouragement | for ambition , | and ,  
 finding | no Atropos | unto | the immortality | of their names , | were  
 never | damped with | the necessity | of oblivion | Even old | ambi-  
 tions | had the advantage | of ours , | in the attempts | of their vain-  
 glories , | who acting | early , | and before | the probable | meridian  
 of time , | have by this time | found | great accomplishment | of their  
 designs , | whereby | the ancient | heroes | have already | out-lasted |  
 their monuments , | and mechanical | preservations | But in this  
 latter | scene | of time , | we cannot | expect | such mummies | unto

our | memories, | when ambition | may fear | the prophecy | of  
Elias, | and Charles | the Fifth | can never | hope | to live | within  
two | Methuselahs | of Hector

And therefore | restless | inquietude | for the di|uturnity | of our  
memories | unto present | considerations, | seems a vanity | almost |  
out of date, | and | superannuated | piece | of folly | We cannot |  
hope | to live | so long | in our names, | as some | have done | in  
their persons, | one face | of Janus holds | no proportion | unto the  
other | 'Tis too late | to be ambitious | The great | mutations | of  
the world | are acted, | or time | may be | too short | for our  
designs | To extend | our memories | by monuments, | whose  
death | we daily | pray for, | and whose duration | we cannot | hope, |  
without injury | to our | expectations, | in the advent | of the last  
day, | were a contradiction | to our beliefs | We | whose genera-  
tions | are ordained | in this setting | part | of time, | are | pro-  
videntially | taken off | from such | imaginations, | and being |  
necessitated | to eye | the remaining | particle | of futurity, | are  
naturally | constituted | unto thoughts | of the next | world, | and  
cannot | excusably | decline | the consideration | of that | duration, |  
which maketh | Pyramids | pillars | of snow, | and all | that's past |  
a moment

Circles | and right | lines | limit | and close | all bodies, | and  
the mortal | right lined | circle | must conclude | and shut up | all |  
There is no | antidote | against | the opium | of time, | which tem-  
porally | considereth | all things, | our fathers | find | their graves |  
in our short | memories, | and sadly | tell us | how we | may be  
buried | in our survivors | Grave-stones | tell truth | scarce forty |  
years | Generations | pass | while some | trees stand, | and old |  
families | last not | three oaks | To be read | by bare | inscrip-  
tions | like many | in Gruter, | to hope | for Eternity | by enigma-  
tical | epithets | or first | letters | of our names, | to be studied | by  
antiquaries, | who we were, | and have | new names | given us | like  
many | of the mummies, | are cold | consolations | unto the students |  
of per|petuity | even | by everlasting | languages <sup>1</sup>

To be content | that times | to come | should only | know | there  
was such a man, | not caring | whether | they knew more of him, |  
was a frigid | ambition | in Cardan | disparaging | his horoscopal  
inclination | and judgment | of himself, | who cares | to subsist | like

<sup>1</sup> In this short paragraph what De Quincey would call the *syntole* and *diastole* of rhythm may be studied almost as well as anywhere

Hippocrates' | patients, | or Achilles' | horses | in Homer, | under  
 naked | nominations, | without deserts | and noble | acts, | which are  
 the balsam | of our memories, | the Entelechia | and soul | of our  
 subsistences | To be nameless | in worthy | deeds | exceeds | an  
 infamous | history | The Canaanitish | woman | lives | more happily |  
 without | a name, | than Herodias | with one | And who | had not  
 rather | have been | the good thief, | than Pilate ?

But the iniquity | of oblivion | blindly | scattereth | her poppy, |  
 and deals | with the memory | of men | without | distinction | to  
 merit of | perpetuity | Who | can but pity | the founder | of the  
 Pyramids ? | Herostratus | lives | that burnt | the Temple | of  
 Diana, | he is almost lost | that built it, | Time | hath spared | the  
 epitaph | of Adrian's | horse, | confounded | that | of himself | In  
 vain | we compute | our felicities | by the advantage | of our good  
 names, | since bad | have equal | durations, | and Thersites | is  
 like | to live | as long as | Agamemnon | Who knows | whether |  
 the best | of men | be known ? | or whether | there be not | more  
 remarkable | persons | forgot, | than any | that stand | remembered |  
 in the known | account | of time ? | Without | the favour of | the  
 everlasting | register, | the first man | had been | as unknown | as  
 the last, | and Methuselah's | long life | had been | his only | chronicle

Oblivion | is not | to be hired | The greater | part | must be  
 content | to be | as though | they had not been, | to be found | in  
 the register | of God, | not | in the record | of man | Twenty-seven |  
 names | make up | the first story | before the flood, | and the re-  
 corded | names | ever since | contain not | one living | century |  
 The number | of the dead | long | exceedeth | all | that shall live |  
 The night | of time | far surpasseth | the day, | and who | knows  
 when | was the Æquinox ? | Every | hour | adds | unto that  
 current | Arithmetic | which scarce | stands | one moment | And  
 since death | must be | the Lucina | of life, | and even Pagans |  
 could doubt, | whether thus | to live, | were to die | Since our  
 longest | sun | sets | at right | descensions, | and makes | but winter  
 arches, | and therefore | it cannot | be long | before | we lie down  
 in darkness, | and have | our light | in ashes | Since | the brother  
 of death | daily | haunts us | with dying | memento's, | and time  
 that grows old | in it self, | bids us | hope | no long | duration  
 diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is seldom that Browne allows himself thus ugly *homœoteuton*

Darkness | and light | divide | the course | of time,<sup>1</sup> and oblivion  
 shares | with memory, | a great part | even | of our living | beings,  
 we slightly | remembered | our felicities, | and the smartest | strokes  
 of affliction | leave but short | smart | upon us | Sense | endur-  
 eth | no | extremities, | and sorrows | destroy us | or themselves  
 To weep | into stones | are fables | Afflictions | induce | callosities,  
 miseries | are slippery, | or fall | like snow | upon us, | which  
 notwithstanding | is no unhappy | stupidity | To be ignorant | of  
 evils | to come, | and forgetful | of evils | past, | is a merciful  
 provision | in nature, | whereby | we digest | the mixture | of our  
 few | and evil | days, | and our delivered | senses | not | relapsing  
 into cutting | remembrances, | our sorrows | are not kept | raw | by  
 the edge | of repetitions | A great part | of Antiquity | contented  
 their hopes | of subsistency | with a transmigration | of their souls |  
 A good way | to continue | their memories, | while having | the  
 advantage | of plural | successions, | they could not | but act | some-  
 thing | remarkable | in such | variety | of beings, | and enjoying  
 the fame | of their passed | selves, | make | accumulation | of glory  
 unto their last | durations | Others, | rather | than be lost | in  
 the uncomfortable | night | of nothing, | were content | to recede  
 into the common | being, | and make | one particle | of the public  
 soul | of all things, | which was no more | than to return | into their  
 unknown | and divine | Original | again | Ægyptian | ingenuity  
 was more | unsatisfied, | contriving | their bodies | in sweet | con-  
 sistencies, | to attend | the return | of their souls | But all | was  
 vanity | feeding the winde, | and folly | The Ægyptian | mummies,  
 which Cambyzes | or time | hath spared, | avarice | now | consum-  
 eth | Mummy is become | merchandise, | Mizraim | cures | wounds,  
 and Pharaoh | is sold | for balsams |

In vain do | individuals | hope for | Immortality, | or any | patent  
 from oblivion, | in preservations | below | the Moon | Men | have  
 been deceived | even | in their flatteries | above | the Sun, | and  
 studied | conceits | to perpetuate | their names | in heaven | The  
 various | cosmography | of that part | hath already | varied | the  
 names | of contrived | constellations, | Nimrod | is lost | in Orion,  
 and Osiris | in the Dog-star | While we look | for incorruption | in  
 the heavens, | we find | they are but | like the Earth, | durable | in  
 their main | bodies, | alterable | in their parts, | whereof | beside  
 Comets | and new Stars, | perspectives | begin | to tell tales | And  
 the spots | that wander | about the Sun, | with Phaeton's | favour,  
 would make clear | conviction |

There is nothing | strictly | immortal, | but immortality, | what-  
 ever | hath no beginning, | may be confident | of no end | —which  
 is the peculiar | of that necessary | essence | that cannot | destroy  
 itself, | and the highest | strain of | omnipotency, | to be | so  
 powerfully | constituted | as not | to suffer | even | from the power |

---

<sup>1</sup> A blank verse, again rare

of itself | All others | have a dependent | being, | and within | the  
 reach | of destruction, | but the sufficiency | of Christian | immor-  
 tality | frustrates | all earthly | glory, | and the quality | of either |  
 state | after death | makes a folly | of posthumous | memory | God,  
 who can only | destroy | our souls, | and hath assured | our resur-  
 rection, | either | of our bodies | or names, | hath directly | promised |  
 no | duration | Wherein | there is so much | of chance, | that  
 the boldest | expectants | have found | unhappy | frustration, | and  
 to hold | long | subsistence, | seems but | a scape | in oblivion |  
 But man | is a noble | animal, | splendid | in ashes, | and pompous |  
 in the grave, | solemnizing | nativities | and deaths | with equal |  
 lustre, | nor omitting | ceremonies | of bravery | in the infamy | of  
 his nature

Life | is a pure | flame, | and we lived by | an invisible | Sun |  
 within us | A small | fire | sufficeth | for life, | great flames  
 seemed | too little | after death, | while men | vainly | affected |  
 precious | pyres, | and to burn | like | Sardanapalus | But the  
 wisdom | of funeral | laws | found | the folly | of prodigal | blazes,  
 and reduced | undoing | fires | unto the rule | of sober | obsequies,  
 wherein | few | could be so mean | as not | to provide | wood,  
 pitch, | a mourner, | and an urn

Five | languages | secured not | the epitaph | of Gordianus | The  
 man of God | lives longer | without | a tomb | than any | by one,  
 invisibly | interred | by Angels, | and adjudged | to obscurity,  
 though not | without | some marks | directing | human | discovery |  
 Enoch | and Elias, | without | either tomb | or burial | in an anoma-  
 lous | state | of being, | are the great | examples | of perpetuity, | in  
 their long | and living | memory, | instrict | account | being still | on  
 this side | death, | and having | a late part | yet | to act | upon this  
 stage | of earth | If in | the decretory | term | of the world | we  
 shall not | all die | but be changed, | according | to received | trans-  
 lation | the last day | will make | but few graves, | at least | quick  
 resurrections | will anticipate | lasting | sepultures | Some Graves  
 will be opened | before | they be quite | closed, | and Lazarus | be  
 no wonder | When many | that feared | to die, shall groan | that  
 they can die | but once, | the dismal | state | is the second | and  
 living | death, | when life | puts despair | on the damned, | when  
 men shall wish | the coverings | of mountains, | not | of monuments,  
 and annihilations | shall be courted |

While some | have studied | monuments, | others | have studi-  
 ously | declined them | and some | have been so vainly | boisterous,  
 that they durst not | acknowledge their graves, | wherein | Alaricus  
 seems | most subtle, | who had a river | turned | to hide | his  
 bones | at the bottom \* Even Sylla, | that thought himself | safe  
 in his urn, | could not prevent | revenging | tongues, | and stones  
 thrown | at his monument | Happy | are they | whom privacy |

makes innocent, | who deal so | with men | in this world, | that  
they | are not afraid | to meet them | in the next, | who | when  
they die, | make no | commotion | among the dead, | and are not  
touched with | that poetical | taunt | of Isaiah

Pyramids, | Arches, | Obelisks, | were but | the irregularities | of  
vain glory, | and wild | enormities | of ancient | magnanimity | But  
the most | magnanimous | resolution | rests | in the Christian | Re-  
ligion, | which trampleth | upon pride, | and sits | on the neck | of  
ambition, | humbly | pursuing | that infallible | perpetuity, | unto  
which | all others | must diminish | their diameters, | and be  
poorly | seen | in angles | of contingency

Pious | spirits | who passed | their days | in raptures | of futur-  
ity, | made little more | of this world, | than the world | that was  
before it, | while they lay | obscure | in the Chaos | of pre-ordination, |  
and night | of their fore beings | And if any | have been so  
happy | as truly | to understand | Christian | annihilation, | extasis, |  
exolution, | liquefaction, | transformation, | the kiss of the Spouse, |  
gustation of God, | and ingression | into the divine | shadow, | they  
have already | had an handsome | anticipation | of heaven, | the  
glory | of the world | is surely | over, | and the earth | in ashes |  
unto them

To subsist | in lasting | Monuments, | to live | in their produc-  
tions, | to exist | in their names | and predicament | of chimeras, |  
was large | satisfaction | unto old | expectations, | and made | one  
part | of their Elysiums | But all | this | is nothing | in the Meta-  
physics | of true belief | To live | indeed | is to be again | our-  
selves, | which | being not only | an hope | but an evidence | in  
noble | believers, | 'tis all one | to lie | in St Innocents | churchyard, |  
as in the Sands | of Ægypt, | Ready | to be anything, | in the  
ecstasy | of being ever, | and as content | with | six | foot<sup>1</sup> | as the  
Moles | of Adrianus

---

<sup>1</sup> Or a molossus at pleasure



The possibility of comment on this long passage is almost illimitable. But one observation is too important not to be made at once. I first attempted the scansion of the opening sentence many years ago, and have sometimes effected a few alterations at intervals since. I am not now sure whether it is better to take the opening five words together as a heavily weighted dochmiac (or at least a spondee + molossus), or to let them be monosyllabic feet-thuds, as of earth dropping on the coffin-lid or the urn. But this will not affect what I am going to say. I had never even noticed, until I was actually writing this comment, and therefore I need hardly assure the reader that I had never, even half unconsciously, led up to the discovery, that in the above scansion no two identical feet<sup>1</sup> ever follow each other, not so much as on a single occasion. Now we have observed, from the first, that variety of foot arrangement, without definite equivalence, appears to be as much the secret of prose rhythm as uniformity of value, with equivalence or without it, appears to be that of poetic metre. Here is perhaps the very finest phrase of English prose itself—one of the finest by something like a common agreement. And here, arrived at and verified with an entire absence of design, is the presence of that variety, pushed to what might have seemed antecedently an almost impossible point. Of course, this may be merely a coincidence, but it is surely rather a remarkable one<sup>2</sup>.

The almost or quite equally famous close of the *Garden of Cyrus* merits equally careful study

But the quincunx of heaven runs low, and 'tis time to close the five ports of knowledge. We are unwilling to spin out our awaking thoughts into the phantasms of sleep, which often continueth pre-

<sup>1</sup> These remarks concern the *first* paragraph, "Now—say" but there are not very many such sequences elsewhere. Monosyllables do not count.

<sup>2</sup> In the less exalted and "full dressed" passages similar feet do, of course, occur in couples or even groups, but variety and gradation are much more prominent. The reader will not, I hope, have missed the suggestion of those *six* syllable feet, which are often noticed elsewhere as possibilities, though they can be technically avoided by admitting the constant *apostrophation* (especially in the definite article) of the time, or by dividing words on my own older, and not yet quite abandoned, principle.

cogitations, making cables of cobwebs, and wildernesses of handsome groves. Besides, Hippocrates hath spoke so little, and the oneirocritical masters have left such frigid interpretations from plants, that there is little encouragement to dream of paradise itself. Nor will the sweetest delight of gardens afford much comfort in sleep, wherein the dulness of that sense shakes hands with delectable odours, and though in the bed of Cleopatra, can hardly with any delight raise up the ghost of a rose.

Night, which Pagan theology could make the daughter of Chaos, affords no advantage to the description of order, although no lower than that mass can we derive its genealogy. All things began in order, so shall they end, and so shall they begin again, according to the ordainer of order and mystical mathematics of the city of heaven.

Though Somnus in Homer be sent to rouse up Agamemnon, I find no such effects in these drowsy approaches of sleep. To keep our eyes open longer were but to act our antipodes. The huntsmen are up in America, and they are already past their first sleep in Persia. But who can be drowsy at that hour which freed us from everlasting sleep? or have slumbering thoughts at that time, when sleep itself must end, and as some conjecture all shall awake again.

This, on the whole, is in a minor key, and uses more muffled instruments. The quaintness of the master has a little (only a little) got the better of his magnificence. But the extraordinary subtlety and variety of it, and the unerring adjustment of the different rhythms to the different senses, are almost equally apparent. Note, for instance, the shift of cadence in the closes of the three paragraphs: the sarcastic liveliness of "the ghost of a rose", the splendour (here, at least, at almost its full height) of "according | to the ordainer | of order | and mystical | mathematics | of the city | of heaven", the solemnity of the cluster of *a* sounds, and the arrangement of monosyllable, anapæst, and iamb, in "all | shall awake | again."

These minor adjustments of Browne's, which it would have taken a long chapter to exhibit fully in the longer passage, may be further exemplified here in several. Note the almost literal "dropping off" of the pæon, amphibrach, and iamb, "in these drowsy | approaches | of sleep" | Note the identical movement, doubtless inspired by the same motive, of "But the quincunx | of heaven | runs

low" | Note the *arch* of the period, "But who | can be  
drowsy | at that hour | which freed us | from everlasting |  
sleep," and the "bearing up" of the second sentence by  
strong dochmiac combinations, so that the second half  
can easily gear itself on. It is one of the faults in style  
of most writers of this period, from Milton downwards,  
that they neglect this precaution, and worse than neglect  
it—conducting a phrase to an almost dying close, and  
then, as it were, rudely kicking it up again with an un-  
expected appendix. Browne does not do this, but by a  
prodigal and almost prodigious variety achieves all his  
effects, minor and major. How far he calculated it, one  
cannot say, but it is at least noteworthy that it is much  
less obvious in the work which he did not himself publish  
than in that which he did. And it was insufficient atten-  
tion to this peculiarity which, when Johnson came to study  
him, injured, as we shall see, the result of the Johnsonian  
following.

But let us attempt the promised *sylva* of shorter quotations, illustrating this and other peculiarities. They shall be arranged chronologically, and in the order in which they occur in the different works.

I confess | there is cause | of passion | between us,<sup>1</sup> | by his  
sentence | I stand | excommunicated, | *Heretic* | is the best | lan-  
guage | he | affords me, | yet can no ear | witness | I | ever | returned  
him | the name | of *Antichrist*, | *Man of Sin*, | or | *Whore of Babylon*

Here the first three *kola*, being parallel, end similarly in three amphibrachs

between us  
-icated  
affords me

But the last, which is the antithesis-consequent to all three, lengthens itself out, runs quite differently, and closes with a dochmiac of mild expostulatory meditation,

<sup>1</sup> Browne and the Pope

separable, as these dochmiacs often are, into single syllables, as if the writer were greatly shocked and disturbed at having to pronounce the offensive term

Here is one rather longer, not perhaps very elaborate in appearance, but one which, when it is duly examined, will be found singularly accomplished

/ We need not | labour | with so many | arguments | to confute |  
Judicial | Astrology, | for if | there be | a truth therein | it does  
not | injure | Divinity | If | to be born | under Mercury | disposeth  
us | to be witty, | under Jupiter | to be wealthy, | I do not owe | a  
knee | unto these | but unto | *that merciful | Hand | that hath*  
*ordered | my indifferent | and uncertain | nativity | unto such |*  
*benevolous | aspects |* Those | that hold | that all things | are  
governed | by Fortune | had not erred, | had they not | persisted |  
there<sup>1</sup> The Romans | that erected | a temple | to Fortune | acknow-  
ledged | therein, | though | in a blinder way, | something | of  
Divinity, | for, | in a wise | supputation, | all things | begin | and  
end | in the Almighty | *There is a nearer | way | to Heaven | than*  
*Homer's | chain | an easy | Logic | may conjoin | Heaven | and*  
*Earth | in one Argument, | and with less | than a Sorites | resolve |*  
*all things | into God*

It would be difficult to find, anywhere, more simply beautiful examples of rhythm than the two italicised passages

Here again is a quainter but hardly a finer sample

There was more | than one Hell | in Mag|dalene<sup>2</sup> | when there  
were | seven | Devils | for every | Devil | is an Hell | unto him-  
self,<sup>3</sup> | he holds | enough | of torture | in his own | *ubi,* | and needs  
not | the misery | of circumference | to afflict him | And thus |  
a distracted | conscience | here, | is a shadow | or introduction | unto  
Hell | hereafter |

In close connection with this occurs another *altitude* of prose harmony

/ And to be true | and speak, | my soul, | when I survey | the  
occurrences | of my life, | and call | into account | the Finger | of

<sup>1</sup> One of Browne's double (or *enveloped*) meanings "Persisted there" involves not merely "maintained this position," but "refused to go beyond"

<sup>2</sup> I think the word division in this rhythm is necessary, as it is in the metre of Rossetti's

Ce|cily, Ger|trude, Mag|dalen[e],

to bring out the marvellous beauty of the name by the help of the pause Whether Browne intended the final *e* to be valued or not matters little

<sup>3</sup> "Why, this is Hell nor am I out of it"

God, | I can conceive | nothing | but an abyss | or mass | of mercies |  
 either | in general | to mankind | or | in particular | to myself |  
 And | whether out | of the prejudice | of my affection | or an in-  
 verting | and partial | conceit | of his mercies | I know not, | but |  
 those | which others | term | crosses, | afflictions, | judgments, | mis-  
 fortunes, | to me, | who inquire | further | into them | than their  
 visible | effects, | they both appear | and in event | have ever | proved |  
 those secret | and dissembled | favours | of His | affection |

The famous passage about his life being a "miracle of thirty years" might be added to these from the *Religio* but we must not draw too much from one only of such copious founts<sup>1</sup>

A few of the "golden couplets disclosed" in those nests of such things, the *Urn-Burial* and the *Garden of Cyrus*, may be selected, even after the selections above. Nothing, indeed, could be a much better sample of the music of Browne than the opening of the *Hydrotaphia*, or rather of its "Dedicatory Letter"

When the funeral pyre was out, and the last valediction over, men took a lasting adieu of their interred friends, little expecting the curiosity of future ages should comment upon their ashes, and, having no old experience of the duration of their reliques, held no opinion of such after-considerations

But who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? who hath the oracle of his ashes, or whither they are to be scattered? The reliques of many lie like the ruins of Pompeys, in all parts of the earth, and when they arrive at your hands, these may seem to have wandered far, who in a direct and meridian travel, have but few miles of known earth between yourself and the pole

This opening is of the highest "curiosity"

When the fu|neral pyre | was out  
 And the last | valedic|tion over

has in itself an almost excessively metrical correspond-  
 ence—it at once invites completion

<sup>1</sup> One *amaritude* of the most excellent may be given, because it is of the kind which at once and utterly, in the writing for the one, in the reading for the many, dis herds and separates the sheep from the goats "The vulgarity of those judgments | that wrap | the Church | of God | in Strabo's | cloak |" (1 lv i overture) For irony of phrase and thought and rhythm combined, that seems to me unsurpassed especially when I think of some popular writers of our day brought to the bar of Sir Thomas for "vulgarity of judgment"

Then the mourn|er he turned | about  
And his head | he did sad|ly cover,<sup>1</sup>

but only if you look at it in a poetical way, and hear it with a metrical ear As *prose*, the iambic ending of one clause ("was out") and the trochaic ("over") of the other defeat the suggestion, which is further smothered by the entirely non-correspondent rhythm of the succeeding words, "men took a lasting adieu," etc

For a short example, showing the sudden *pyrotechnic* effect (in dealing elsewhere with Browne<sup>2</sup> I have ventured to question the banality or *banausia* sometimes connected with this word), we can hardly find a better than

Nor only | these concealed | pieces, | *but the open | magnificence | of antiquity,* | ran much | in the artifice | of clay

Or the often quoted

Liquors | not | to be computed | by years | of annual | magistrates, |  
but by great | conjunctions, | and the fatal | periods | of kingdoms

Or the quaint fancy, centring on a double alliteration

All urns | contained not | single | ashes, | without | confused |  
burnings | they | affectionately | compounded | their bones, | passion-  
ately | endeavouring | to continue | their living | unions

Or that other more splendid passage, illuminated as it were almost from the outset by the light, and dominated by the crash, of "*terra damnata*," with the strange and purposely muffled contrast of "aged cinders"

<sup>c</sup> But the "Garden" will not be left behind the "Yard,"  
<sup>of</sup> though we cull not so many herbs and flowers from it

"Gardens | were before | gardeners | and but | some  
hours | after | the earth |" is an early and effective example of an extremely simple combination—dissyllabic and trisyllabic feet only, yet giving a prose-rhythm absolutely incapable of being confused with verse-metre

More complex, and remarkable because of the fact

<sup>1</sup> "This author is so ignorant that he imagines the ancients to have gone to funerals with uncovered heads" (*Zoilus in futuro*)

<sup>2</sup> *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vii

that rather elaborate rhythmical form is given to a mere statement without any special preciousness of thought or choiceness of phraseology, is—

In the | memorāble | gārdēn | of Alcīnōus, | ānciently | cō-  
 ceived<sup>1</sup> | an original | fancy | from Parādise,<sup>2</sup> | mention | there is |  
 of well | contrived | order, | for so | hath Didymus | and Eustachius |  
 expounded | the emphati cal<sup>2</sup> | word

In the following the Johnsonian germs are clear

He shall | not fall | on trite | or trivial | disquisitions | And  
 these | we invent | and propose | unto acuter | enquirers, | nauseating |  
 crambē | verities | and questions | over-queried | Flat | and  
 flexi ble | truths | are beat out | by every | hammer, | but Vulcan |  
 and his whole | forge | sweat | to work out | Achilles | his armour

Two passages, at least, from the curious *Letter to a Friend* should be included in this exhibition. It would appear that there was a strong personal feeling at the back of Browne's professional interest in this case of a consumptive patient who died at thirty, and it has chequered his singular melancholy—never funereal in a commonplace or ugly fashion, but always near to the *dirige*—with a *placebo* of quaintness, as if to keep off an actual breakdown. But how little he has forgotten—not his *swashing* blow but his sleight of hand—may be seen from the end-notes of this four-barred phrase

He that is staidly inclined were unwise to pass his days in |  
 Portugal—

Cholical persons will find little comfort in Austria or | Vienna—

He that is weak-legged must not be in love with | Rome—

Nor an infirm head with Venice | or Paris

<sup>1</sup> I think Browne very likely intended the “eds” to be valued in these words

<sup>2</sup> Pæon and iambic, or dochmiac and monosyllabic foot, are at discretion here

Or, to take a pronounced humour-stroke, not out of keeping with the House of Melancholy

But hairs | make fallible | predictions | and many | temples |  
early gray | have outlived | the Psalmist's | period

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Morals* has had harder things said of it than any other of Browne's books and it may be admitted to stand to the rest somewhat in the relation of *Samson Agonistes* to the rest of Milton's verse, with the additional disadvantage of never having been revised by its author. Its singular confusion (or from another point of view, parallelism) with the *Letter to a Friend*—as if the writer had never quite made up his mind whether both were to stand, or only one, and if both, how the contents were to be finally distributed—is quite decisive as to both<sup>1</sup> being half-done work. And there are not a few passages in the *Morals* where the phrase and cadence seem to invite, if not to insist upon, further filing and chiselling, further symphonising and counterpointing. Yet hardly the *Hydriotaphia*, or the *Garden of Cyrus*, contains more magnificent descants in little, though the sententious arrangement prevents any such *opus magus* or *maximum* as that quoted above. Observe the dexterity of this

As charity | covers, | so Modesty | preventeth, | a multitude | of  
sins, | withholding | from noonday | vices | and brazen-browed |  
iniquities, | from sinning | on the house-top, | and painting | our  
follies | with the rays | of the sun,

where it may be observed that if both verbs in the first clause had had the -s, or both the -th, the rhythm would have been not a little inquinated, as Browne himself might have said.

On the other hand, I think he would, in final revision, have reduced the alliteration and given more concinnity to the cadence in

---

<sup>1</sup> More than one hypothesis as to Browne's intentions may not be unreasonable—as that the *Letter* might, at one time, have been intended to be a sort of minor episode or *enclave* in the *Morals*, at another to have opened, as it does, with the narrative part of the particular case, and then have exalted and enlarged itself into the general treatise or even something fuller. The two are, in a way, Browne's *Holy Dying* and his *Holy Living*.



Culpable beginnings have found commendable conclusions, and infamous courses pious retractations,

where also the two clauses end too much alike

He can sometimes (as in Sect VII of Part II) commit the fault of adjusting a tail of clauses badly

If the Almighty will not spare us according to His merciful capitulation at Sodom, if His goodness please not to pass over a great deal of Bad for a small pittance of Good, or to look upon us in the lump, there is slender hope for mercy or sound presumption of fulfilling half His will | either in persons or nations || they who excel in some virtues being so often defective in others, ||| few men driving at the extent and amplitude of goodness, but computing themselves by their best parts, and others by their worst, are content to rest in those virtues which others commonly want

Here I think Browne's critical "flapper" would have struck at "will" when at his best and wariest, might in an easier mood have refrained till "nations", but would, if present and vigilant at any regular revision, have redoubled his blows to secure a full stop at "others" As for the rest of the sentence, it is a mere appendage, almost as bad as Milton's worst

On the other hand, in spite of some of the most sesquipedalian words, of the most artificially and over-artificially contorted antitheses, in spite of a hint of grotesque about the quaintness, how much of the splendour of Browne's idiosyncrasy is here

Let the characters | of good | things | stand | indelibly | in thy mind | and thy thoughts | be active | on them Trust not | too much unto | suggestions from | reminiscential | amulets, | or artificial memorandums | Let | the mortifying | Janus | of Co|varrubias | be in thy daily | thoughts, | not only | on thy hand | and signets | Rely not | alone | upon silent | and dumb | remembrances | Behold not | Death's heads | till thou dost not | see them, | nor look upon | mortifying | objects | till thou over|look'st them | Forget not | how assuefaction | unto anything | minorates | the passion from it, | how constant | objects | loose | their hints | and steal | an inadvertisement<sup>1</sup> | upon us | There is no | excuse | to forget what everything | prompts | unto us To thoughtful | observators the whole | word | is | a phylactery, | and everything | we see | an item | of the wisdom, | power, | or goodness | of God |

<sup>1</sup> A "sixer," I think

And how far more splendid still, how absolutely of the first order, are two short phrases to be found within a page of each other

Acquaint thy self with | the Chōragium | of the stars,

and

Behold thyself | by inward | optics | and the Crystalline | of thy  
soul

And indeed, if any one would acquaint himself with the choragium of the stars of English prose—if he would, from a different point of analogy, look through the Crystalline of *its* soul—it is to this seventeenth-century division that he must turn. I could add examples from other and lesser stars of this galaxy, but still such as shed the starry comfort. Glanvill, not merely in the famous sentence which, “like morn from Memnon,” drew from Edgar Poe the harmony of *Ligeia*, Thomas Burnet, in his tones as of a softened Apocalypse, may seem to demand admission, while much earlier, my friend and predecessor, the late David Masson, would have remonstrated with me for not including Drummond of Hawthornden in the *Cypress Grove*, and others would press for the anonymous “Essay on Death,” improperly ascribed to Bacon. But the tale is yet long, and it is of a character specially dangerous to lengthen

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CONCURRENCE OF THE PLAIN

The charm of seventeenth century ornateness—Glanvill—But such ornateness not for all work—The forging of the plant for this—Ben Jonson—High value of the *Discoveries*—Hobbes—His eminence and its contrasted character—The “Race” and “Love” passages of *Human Nature*—Clarendon

AT the close of the last chapter the opinion was provisionally expressed that the period of seventeenth-century ornate style (extending over rather more than two generations in the conventional sense of that word) was the crown and flower of English prose in regard to beauty and originality of rhythmical form<sup>1</sup>. It is too early yet (if indeed it will not always be so) to decide finally what the special characteristics of that beauty were, we must see the rest of the development, and especially that of the only really competing period—1820 to 1890—before fixing on, or rather suggesting, these even to the extent permissible in literary enquiry. But enough document should have been given, and perhaps more than enough comment, whereon to base some general remarks.

If the fact of the charm be denied, there is no use in counter-affirmation. The ear which is insensible thereto would not have its dead nerves vivified though one of the other dead came to testify to the matter. Take *illud Glanvillianum* itself. “Man doth not yield himself to the

<sup>1</sup> “The shout of a king is among them”—as Balaam, the son of Beor, that early and unfortunate but characteristic type of a “literary man,” observed of the children of Israel—or “Jacobel,” if any one prefers it.

angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will" The sentiment is great and—Heaven knows!—appealing, the *aura* or *penumbra* of expression (which some good souls would fain identify with the meaning itself, lest they allow too much to form) is better But how much of this, and how much more, impossible to bind to the meaning at all except by sheer voluntary association, is due purely to vowel and consonant music, and to rhythmical arrangement!<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere perhaps better, though it may be (and fortunately) in a hundred other places as well, can we see the greatest difference between prose and verse rhythm, between, that is to say, rhythm diverse and rhythm uniform The charms of the latter are not likely to be denied or minimised here, nor are those of the third and fourth rhythms, that of music and that of spoken rhetoric, which attach and part themselves so cunningly, and in some cases it would seem so deludingly, to and from the others We know how one kind of rhythm, falling in with strong temporary assistance of mood, will for a time exalt and sustain sheer gibberish like the words of *Lilliburlero*, bombastic drivel like those of the *Marseillaise* We know how, to come to nobler and cleaner matter, the more uniform rhythm of poetry supplies one hardly dares to say how much of the magic of Shelley and of Shakespeare This other, or prose, witchcraft I suppose appeals to fewer than the spells of the older muse The variation of the clause-ends (already indicated more than once as a source of sublimity)—“angels,” “utterly,” and then the clenching “will”—the way in which this last pulls up and fortifies the luscious and almost choriambic

<sup>1</sup> This arrangement is a peculiarly audacious justification of the old assertion that “no kind of rhythm is denied to prose” The latter half “save only | through the weakness | of his feeble | will,” is by itself almost insolently metrical But the echo of the entirely different opening, “Man | doth not yield | himself | to the angels | nor unto | Death | utterly,” reclaims and redeems it for prose, though even here the subtle third pæon (with its ionic suggestion) “to the angels” intimates the tune of the end

or ionic pæons, lest the movement should be too effeminate, —the solemn intruded note “unto | death | utterly”—all these things are wonderful

The investigation and degustation of them may be, I have said, a delight to the few, but the beauty of the whole, if less voluptuously appreciated, may be, it is hoped, a joy to many—these delights and joys being almost endlessly repeated and varied in the greater and lesser writers of the period. But without entering into the various arguments which may be urged against ornate style of the kind, such as the difficulty of maintaining it at its best, and the liability to positive ugliness and disorder in inefficient hands, there is one consideration which may be properly, and indeed must in propriety, be taken here. It is obvious that extremely, delicately, and complicatedly rhymed prose of this kind is by no means extensively or universally fit for what has been called “the instrument of the average purpose.” It is not merely that the ordinary reader is, as the old and often-quoted anecdote about Gautier and Girardin has it, “made uncomfortable by the style,” but that that style is intrinsically unsuitable for direct and methodical exposition, doubtfully and only occasionally suitable for plain narration, critically impossible as a vehicle of conversation, scientific instruction, practical argument, and the whole range or ranges of what is succinctly called “business.” The very users of it confess this in various ways. We want, as Beatrice says, “another for working days.”

Accordingly we should expect to find, and we do find, that, side by side with the more many-centred and elaborate rhythms, plainer prose appears throughout this period itself. And especially if we remember the course of the “other harmony” during the same time, and the ultimate (temporary-ultimate, of course) triumph of the uniform stopped couplet, we shall not be surprised to find something similar occurring here.

It has indeed been already shown that, in the first de-  
liberate prose-writing—that of Fisher and his followers—

the simple antithetic or parallel balance-swing is the limit of rhythmical tendency, that polycentred harmonies do not appear, that this is even more perceptible in Ascham and even in Lyly, though tricks of phrase and concerts of thought variegated and half muffle it here, and that even the wonderful harmonies of Hooker are not, as a rule, very elaborate. Further, some of the very writers who have been noticed in the last two chapters, like Lyly, might be, and have been, claimed rather for this. Putting aside the usual pregnancy of his thought and the occasional brilliancy of his phrase, Bacon is not a writer very ornate or Composite, hardly even Corinthian, in rhythm. Neither is Burton. In Bacon's pupils and admirers, Jonson and Hobbes, in Clarendon (who, however, draws on himself some of the censures invited by the symphonic writers, though he does not give us much of their solace), and in others, we find the making of the line which leads straight up to the great plain style of the later seventeenth, the whole of the eighteenth, and the earliest nineteenth centuries. They will need briefer treatment, as they give less poignant and less multifold pleasure, than their fellows. But they are not to be despised, and, like those fellows, it may be doubted whether they have been surpassed, in their own way, while their followers had practically the field to themselves in the next.

We are at some, though not at very serious, disadvantage, as regards Ben Jonson's prose, in that we possess no single finished prose work of considerable size, undoubted finish, and deliberate literary pretension. The prefaces and prose parts of the Plays cannot be held as such, the *Drummond* conversations are short-hand and second-hand fragments, the *English Grammar* could hardly give much of the kind we want, and does give less than it might, the "Discourse of Poesy," which, in this as in other ways, ought to have been specially precious, does not apparently exist, nor can we even (without throwing any doubt on Drummond's good faith) be certain that it ever did exist, except as a project.

There remains the curious work variously entitled

*Explorata*, *Discoveries*, and *Timber*, and some of us are not dissatisfied with it as building material. Every one must be grateful for the trouble which Professor Schelling in America took, partially, a good many years ago, and M. Castellain in France more recently on a more extensive scale, in the way of identifying Ben's classical and other authorities and sources. But it is not illiberal or *outré* to say that every one who knew these originals must have recognised them long before even Professor Schelling wrote, and that the verdict of wholesale plagiarism which others have delivered, on the strength of further collation, must be broken by any competent court of critical appeal. If this is beyond our province, the *Discoveries*, had they been a direct unmanipulated translation, avowed or unavowed, of a single book, would still belong to it eminently.

For whatever be the origin of their thought,<sup>1</sup> the vehicle of their expression is pure English, and English of a type remarkable in itself, to a great extent novel, and extremely germinal. Elizabethan translations had been, as we have seen, numerous and interesting, but as a rule couched in styles with which those of their originals had very little to do, except in distant and roundabout ways. Classical form had exercised great influence on Ascham and Cheke, little on North or even Holland. But Ben succeeded—while manifesting an originality beside which that of more apparently spontaneous writers is merely childish—in assimilating with due transference of key, the sententious quality of the silver Latins, who were his special cult, in at the same time maintaining English quality, and in adapting both to a plain style such as had never yet been achieved. He preserves—his kind cannot but preserve—the balance of Ascham and Lyly as his chief rhetorical instrument, but he raises the

<sup>1</sup> And it may be just pardonable, in view of some recent utterances, to remind readers that the most interesting things in the book, the remarks on Shakespeare, and Spenser, and Bacon, and others, *can* have no indebtedness to Horace or to Heinsius, to Scaliger or to Seneca, while the selection, co-adaptation, and application of the borrowed phrases to express Ben's views constitute a work more really original than most utterances that are guiltless of literature.

comparatively commonplace style of the former to a far higher power, and entirely discards the fantastic vocabulary, and the frippery generally, of the latter. For the most part, too, he avoids the extreme Latinising in which his younger contemporaries and immediate successors indulged—a word like “unbratical,” which he was almost forced to retain in his paraphrase of Petronius, is an exception and not a common exception. Sometimes he is almost vernacular in this respect, like his predecessors above mentioned, but with a more polished and modern touch, as in this

What a deal of cold business doth a man spend the better part of life in<sup>1</sup> in scattering compliment, tendering visits, gathering and venting news, following feasts and plays, making a little winter love in a dark corner

The precise rhythm, here and elsewhere, is more cunning perhaps<sup>1</sup> than may appear at first hearing, but it is evidently not in the least that symphony of “cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music” to which we have been listening in the last chapter. Nor when Ben raises his tone will he attempt this

If in some things I dissent from others whose wit, ministry, and diligence and judgment I look up at and admire, let me not therefore hear presently of ingratitude and rashness. For I thank those that have taught me, and will ever but yet dare not think the scope of their labour and enquiry was to envy their posterity what they also could add and find out

Again, no absence of rhythm and no inferior quality of it, but one in no sense trenching on the poetical, and not even attempting the higher and more ambitious flights of the orator. A business like style, entirely free from the disqualifications of its opposite, if destitute of that opposite’s charms—a style (in no belittling sense) of all work, sometimes almost conversational in a modern way, and often so according to the way of the time—the practice of the dramatist showing itself

In such a style we do not expect even the swallow

<sup>1</sup> Note the long and comparatively *unaccented* arrangement of the overture, and the parallel *stichs* following and lengthening out as they do



flights in gentle soar and stoop, in sweep of longer or shorter length or circle, that we find in Hooke, still less the vast symphonic fugues of Browne or Milton or Taylor, least of all the minor devices—such, for instance, as that arrangement of parallel but differently ended clauses so often noted. Antithesis, balance, parallel—these are, as has been said, the main instruments. Even when the sentences are long, they are cumulative rather than periodic.

The way in which the plainer style is, as Scots has it, “thirled”—inevitably bound to and obliged to deal with—this balanced arrangement is excellently illustrated in the curious and characteristic section *Beneficia*<sup>1</sup>. One could deny some of its propositions pretty plumply as to their meaning, but from whomsoever Ben took the matter, there is no question as to the idiosyncrasy of the form—both as regards his own character and as regards the actual style. One thinks of the admirable Greek word for “kick” (*λακτίζειν*) as the scornful, ungracious clauses with their short staccato motion rank surlily over against each other. And everywhere—in the great show-passages as to Shakespeare and Bacon, which he certainly did not take from Quintilian or Seneca, in the (if you like it) adaptations from Heinsius on Tragedy and Poetry, in the thoughts on Education—everywhere there is the same rhythm, never in the least confused or blunted, clumsy or

<sup>1</sup> Nothing | is a courtesy, | unless | it be meant | as such | and that  
 friendly | and lovingly | We owe | no thanks | to rivers | that they | carry |  
 our boats, | oi winds that they | be favouring | and fill | our sails, | or  
 meats | that they | be nourishing | For these things | are | what they are |  
 necessarily | Horses | carry us, | trees | shade us, | but they | know it  
 not | It is true | some man | may receive | a courtesy | and not know it, |  
 but never | any man | received it | from him | that knew it not | Many |  
 men | have been cured | of diseases | by accidents, | but they | were not |  
 remedies | It is the mind | and not | the event | that distinguisheth |  
 the courtesy | from wrong

blemished, very seldom (not quite never) yielding to the master temptation of the time, an inartistic epexegetis

Jonson's eminence in the other divisions of poetry and drama, and his almost unsurpassed literary influence, eke out the somewhat scanty documents, or in the French heraldic sense "proofs," of his position in prose. Those of Bacon's other great disciple, Hobbes, need no such eking. More charming, more magnificent, more succulent and satisfying and delightful writers of our prose there certainly are. I doubt whether in his own way, or even in any way, there is a greater. In his principles, indeed, as well as in practice, Hobbes might seem likely to yield us very little. His subjects, even putting aside his rugged and *revêche*<sup>1</sup> classical translations, and his vain and amateurish mathematical wanderings, are confined to departments of literature, especially the philosophical and the political, which, though they have shown themselves capable of the best styles, have much more commonly turned out to be patient of the worst. His theory of the "counter" or "token" word—a mere symbol, good for so much strictly defined, and measured, and numbered sense—might seem certainly to neglect, and even to no small extent positively to discourage, ornamentation of the counters, arrangement of them in cunning patterns unnecessary to the meaning, and the like. But no man can wholly avoid the influence of his hour, and no hour can help developing whatever kindred idiosyncrasy may exist in the man it finds. The result is that Hobbes is not merely one of the clearest and most cogent of English writers, but that he has also a strange and (*v* note above) as it were cross-grained magnificence about him—austere and gladiatorial, but undoubted—and that this magnificence calls to its aid a rhythm which is a kind of opposition member of the family of the rhythms of Browne and Milton themselves, while it is almost equally suggestive of Hobbes's older contemporaries (for these

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that while there is (or was in our better days) so much of this quality in the English temperament, we should have no word for it except a compound, "cross grained," and a vulgarism, "contrary."

others were his younger in age, though not in writing) such as Donne and even Raleigh

His style is thus even more than usually connected with his thought as well as with his character, but there went another element to its making. Hobbes was notoriously a very late writer, or at least publisher, nothing of his appeared till he was nearly forty. But there is reason for thinking that, up to that time at least, if (as he must) he had written, he had written chiefly in Latin, and he almost always issued his work—like Bacon, but in an almost greater degree—in the older language as well as in English. To write Latin currently was of course a main part of a liberal education in the seventeenth century, especially for persons who dealt with the graver subjects, but not even to Milton does it seem to have come so much by nature as to Hobbes. And his Latin style, still more than Milton's, owes little or nothing to the more elegant Latin letters. Hobbes had an even greater contempt for the schoolmen than any one (at least any one speaking with knowledge) has had since, but, though he extended his scorn to their terminology, he consciously or unconsciously adopted much of the aridity of their style. Something of this dryness remains in the English, but it is atoned for, and even to some extent removed, by the vigorous sap of native English phrase, which seems also to have been part of his rugged but vivid nature. Observe the clear and sheer trenchancy of this picture in negative of the State of War

Whatsoever | therefore | is consequent | to a state | of war time, |  
 where every man | is enemy | to every man, | the same | is conse-  
 quent | to the time | wherein | men live | without other | security |  
 than their own | strength | and their own | inventions | shall furnish  
 them | withal | In such | condition | there is no | place | for  
 industry, | because | the fruit thereof | is uncertain, | and conse-  
 quently | no culture | of the earth, | no | navigation | nor use of |  
 the commodities | that may be | imported | by sea, | no | com-  
 modious | building, | no instruments | of moving | and removing |  
 such things | as require | much force, | no knowledge | of the face | of  
 the earth, | no account | of time, | no arts, | no letters, | no  
 society, | and | which is worst | of all | continual | fear | and the  
 danger | of violent | death, | and the life | of man | solitary, |  
 poor, | nasty, | brutish, | and short

Observe, I say, how the crabbed and almost savage temper of this—so true to the facts, so fatal to the fancies age-long cultivated in the poets and to be recooked into poisonous messes by the *philosophes* of the next century—is associated with nothing in the least savage as far as cultivation of style and even of rhythm goes. The “mode” of course is austere and nowise florid—castigated and trained down to the least of flesh and the most of muscle, with no bloom of tint or soft curving outline. But the ear is by no means neglected, still less outraged, almost the only point where logical precision rather injures the effect is the repetition of the same word “consequent” instead of using a synonym in the second place. For the rest, all the clauses and sentences are perfectly well-balanced: the iron ram-head sways itself to and from its blow with an excellent cadence. Nay, more, in the fascicle of parallel deprivations which constitutes the second sentence, there is a singular variety, which may be unconscious, but cannot be accidental, of length and quality of composition, longer and shorter *kola* being perfectly symphonised, while when we come to the end there is a positively artful counter-*ordonnance* of “arts | letters | society” | rising from monosyllable through trochee to pæon, and of “solitary | poor | nasty | brutish and | short,” sloping and sinking from pæon through trochees (“poor” is a virtual trochee and “brutish” an actual one, while “and” merely completes the equivalent dactyl) to the single thud of “short.”

This same knowledge of the secret which does so much both for poets and prose writers, the secret of letting out and pulling in clauses like the slides of a trombone or the “draws” of a telescope, is exemplified, to the eye as well as to the ear, in one of the two capital places of that marvellous miniature masterpiece, *Human Nature*.

The comparison of the life of man to a race, though it hold not in every part, yet it holdeth so well for this our purpose, that we may thereby both see and remember almost all the passions

before mentioned But this *race* we must suppose to have no other *goal*, nor other *garland*, but being foremost, and in it

To endeavour, is *appetite*  
 To be remiss, is *sensuality*  
 To consider them behind, is *glory*  
 To consider them before, is *humility*  
 To lose ground with looking back, *vain glory*  
 To be holden, *hatred*  
 To turn back, *repentance*  
 To be in breath, *hope*  
 To be weary, *despair*  
 To endeavour to overtake the next, *emulation*  
 To supplant or overthrow, *envy*  
 To resolve to break through a stop foreseen, *courage*  
 To break through a sudden stop, *anger*  
 To break through with ease, *magnanimity*  
 To lose ground by little hindrances, *pusillanimity*  
 To fall on the sudden, is disposition to *weep*  
 To see another fall, is disposition to *laugh*  
 To see one out gone whom we would not, is *pity*  
 To see one out-go whom we would not, is *indignation*  
 To hold fast by another, is to *love*  
 To carry him on that so holdeth, is *charity*  
 To hurt one's self for haste is *shame*  
 Continually to be out-gone, is *misery*  
 Continually to out-go the next before, is *felicity*  
 And to forsake the course, is to *die*

It is only necessary to look at this to see the fact, it is only necessary to read it aloud to see that if the arrangement of long and short clauses is merely casual, then Lucretius had a great deal more to say for his atomic theory and its possibilities than is generally thought, while even then we shall have to ask whence came the *exiguum cinamen* which has devised so definite a mass But on the whole the triumph of Hobbes's style is in that other strange passage of the same masterpiece, the account of Love, which contrasts still more strongly with the definition thereof just given

Of love, by which is to be understood the joy man taketh in the fruition of any present good, hath been spoken already in the first section, chapter seven, under which is contained the love men bear to one another or pleasure they take in one another's company and by which nature men are said to be sociable But there is another kind of love which the Greeks call *Ἔρως*, and is that which we mean when we say that a man is in love forasmuch as this

passion cannot be without diversity of sex, it cannot be denied but that it participateth of that indefinite love mentioned in the former section. But there is a great difference betwixt the desire of a man indefinite and the same desire limited *ad hunc* and this is that love which is the great theme of poets but, notwithstanding their praises, it must be defined by the word need for it is a conception a man hath of his need of that one person desired. The cause of this passion is not always nor for the most part beauty, or other quality in the beloved, unless there be withal hope in the person that loveth which may be gathered from this, that in great difference of persons the greater have often fallen in love with the meaner, but not contrary. And from hence it is that for the most part they have much better fortune in love whose hopes are built on something in their person than those that trust to their expressions and service, and they that care less than they that care more which not perceiving, many men cast away their services as one arrow after another, till, in the end, together with their hopes, they lose their wits.

We know little or nothing of Hobbes's youth, and it might seem, not merely from his works generally, but from most of the anecdotes about him, that he never could have been young. But that he must, at some time or other, have been what "we mean when we say that a man is in love" is quite evident from the last two sentences of this supremely remarkable passage. Most probably no "shepherd's hour" ever sounded for him at Malmesbury or at Magdalen Hall, at Chatsworth or at Paris. Whether this be so or not, however, the piece is unquestionably set to a singular under-rhythm, utterly suitable to its subject. The first sentence<sup>1</sup> has the clear perspicuity which has been said to be Hobbes's main characteristic, with a rhythm accordant—plain but not in the least like the dowdy insignificance which, for instance, Locke would have given it. It is exposition pure and simple. The second<sup>2</sup> is exposition likewise, but the subject becomes more agitating, the writer feels the agitation,<sup>3</sup> and the rhythm rises

<sup>1</sup> "Of love, etc."

<sup>2</sup> "But there is, etc."

<sup>3</sup> Ο θῆρ δ' ἔβρινε δειλῶς φοβεῖτο γὰρ Κυνήραν, as Theocritus (or some one else, for it does not matter) has said in a poem of which Lander and, as I understand, the greatest living Greek scholar of Germany, have spoken disrespectfully, but which can afford to pay no attention to their disrespect. For what Lander said critically never much mattered it depended on his mood at the time. And whether the Germans are still as sadly to seek in the language as they once were, *teste* an authority still respected, I should not presume to decide, but I can certainly say that this German was sadly to seek in knowledge of poetry when he followed "Mr. Boythorn."

and falls a little, as it were fluttering. It strives to steady itself in scientific fashion with the next,<sup>1</sup> and so far succeeds as to produce in the fourth<sup>2</sup> and fifth<sup>3</sup> things very remarkable indeed.

These last sentences, and the whole passage, must, of course, be read with the mind's voice, if not also the body's, to perceive their beauty, but, if this be done, I venture to think that a charm of the very rarest will be found in them. The style is of extreme simplicity—"they that care less than they that care more" could not be simpler—but it is noteworthy that this, familiar and almost conversational in phraseology, and terse in bulk and shape, is put between two much longer and more undulating clauses, that in the last, though nowhere else, there is a slight figure, and that the half-resigned despair—the "terror of Cythera"—having been mastered, but the sense of her baleful power remaining, it closes and crowns the passage with the uncommented doom—loss of wits. Again, to hark back a little, read this once more.

In great | difference | of persons | the greater | have often fall(en) |  
in love | with the meaner, | but not | contrary

Every time of reading—at least I have found it so for some half century—the penetrating but not clangorous dirge-sound will be heard more clearly, as also in

For the most part | they | have much better | fortune | in love |  
whose hopes | are built | on something | in their person | than  
those | that trust | to their expressions | and service

Although, as will be seen, the rhythm is of the purest and severest prose type, little but balance being used to produce it, although you cannot get the least scrap of metrical suggestion out of it, although the diction is strictly selected to match, yet Thomas Hobbes, philosopher of Malmesbury, materialist, positivist, atheist, misanthrope, pedant, what you will, has here beaten out a

<sup>1</sup> "But there is a great" (a repetition in itself rather faulty)

<sup>2</sup> "The cause"

<sup>3</sup> "And from hence"

form which, for the expression of unboisterous hopelessness, comes not far short, if short at all, of King's "Tell me no more," and Cowper's *Castaway*, the two poems which have so strangely chosen the same form to express different modes of despair, in the other harmony

The faults of Clarendon's style, from the more general point of view, are almost universally known even to casual students of the subject, and form one of the commonplaces of composition-books and literary histories. It is not only that his sentences are often of such preposterous length that, if you read them as they are printed, and abstain from giving yourself a full stop in breath, except where a full stop is present on the page, you will have at the end to give yourself a much longer one in order to replenish your all but beggared stock. For this, as has been more than once observed, does not really matter to rhythm, and it is equally the case with Mr Ruskin. It perhaps bodes more mischief from that point of view, that this length is, to a large extent and in more ways than one, the result of sheer carelessness. The slightest alteration usually, not seldom none at all, save a simple reform of the punctuation, would meet the case. But often also it would not, and Clarendon has allowed himself to be drawn into complicated, and certainly not admirable, *anacolutha* of construction. Even this would not be fatal to rhythm, as we have seen in Milton's case, nor is it always so with Clarendon himself. But his object was not the elaborate prose of Milton or Taylor or Browne. Clarendon was evidently a born House-of-Commons-man, and the ease of his oratory is well attested. In so far, moreover, as he took any patterns, the French memoir- and character-writers must have been of them, and these, in Clarendon's time, were already aiming at, and to a great extent attaining, that simplicity of phrase which is certainly not characteristic of French prose generally in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.

The result is that, as in Hobbes' case—as indeed everywhere—you must not demand from Clarendon *ce qu'il*



*n'a pas* but only *ce qu'il a* In his case, and despite the long sentences (which are alternated with quite short ones), "what he has" is a certain combination of dignity and ease, which will be found to be not common elsewhere in his time, and hardly to exist before him But we should notice in Clarendon, as in his contemporaries, Walton and Howell, to whom we are coming, as in Owen Felltham and other forerunners of the plain style, as we shall notice still more in the generation (born in or about 1630) who followed them, that we are losing something, though it may be difficult to define that something in terms which will be generally admitted It is not rhythm as such, for—although we may come to the loss even of that—prose without rhythm is scarcely prose at all But it is rhythm which reduces itself to its lowest terms, rhythm which does not indeed hamper or impair the meaning by positive ugliness of sound, which even supplies it with a convenient vehicle of fairly harmonious expression, but which neither adds to it, as the greatest masters of the ornate style do, indefinite and splendid bonuses of sheer musical delight, nor even sets it, as they and others less great attempt to do, and often succeed in doing, to a less lavish and abounding but still additional accomplishment of prose melody Balance and antithesis positively assist comprehension (though with the danger, which we shall see fully illustrated later, of sometimes giving to nonsense an air of comprehensibility), so balance and antithesis are admitted But we discern few other devices of art

That this is sometimes unfortunate can hardly be denied It looks as if Clarendon had tried to work himself into a higher strain in treating the character of King Charles He was evidently himself much moved, and he has achieved moving expression But there are two unlucky breakdowns in the passage, both of which are due, not merely to anti-climax of thought, but to a still greater anti-climax of expression and arrangement

And, after all this, when a man might reasonably believe that less than a universal defection of three nations could not have reduced a

great king to so ugly a fate, it is most certain that in that very hour when he was thus wickedly murdered in the sight of the sun, he had as great a share in the hearts and affections of his subjects in general —was as much beloved, esteemed, and longed for by the people in general of the three nations, *as any of his predecessors had ever been*. To conclude, he was the worthiest gentleman, the best master, the best friend, the best husband, the best father, and the best Christian that the age in which he lived produced. And if he were not the best king, if he were without some parts and qualities which have made some kings great and happy, no other prince was ever so unhappy, who was possessed of half his virtues and endowments, *and so much without any kind of vice*.

Here there is much that is quite good—practically of the best—but the two italicised clauses, which should have wound up and completed the harmony with burst of trumpet or dying fall of lyre, are quite wretched things, blunted gossip-phrase, without selection, appropriateness, or cadence of any sort. There is no such glaring blot in the pendant character of Cromwell, but it also does not aspire above a very ordinary quality of rhythm.

Of some other writers just mentioned, Howell requires no notice here because his very principle and canon was a pedestrian familiarity, but more should perhaps be said, if only in a note, of Walton, on the formal qualities of whose style doctors have differed, though hardly any one who can be called a doctor has denied its charm.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The plainer parts of the *Complete Angler* are incomparably sweet and pleasant narrative conversation. In the more ambitious, Izaak succumbs to verse, not indeed constantly decasyllabic, but sometimes that, and sometimes the favourite octosyllabic of his earlier years. The diction, also, is rather too definitely poetic.

“Look, under that broad beech-tree I sat down, | when I was last this way a fishing, and the birds in the adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow tree, near to the brow of that primrose hill, there I sat viewing | the silver streams glide silently | towards their centre, the tempestuous sea, | yet sometimes opposed | by rugged roots, and pebble stones, | which broke their waves, and turned them into foam | and sometimes I beguiled time by viewing the harmless lambs, some leaping securely in the cool shade, whilst others sported themselves in the cheerful sun, and saw others craving comfort from | the swollen udders of their bleating dams | As I thus sat, these and other sights had so fully possessed my soul with content, that I thought, as the poet has happily expressed it, etc.”

## INTERCHAPTER II

IN the last (and first) Interchapter, what we had to survey was entirely, or almost entirely, tentative, and, what is more, tentative that for the most part, and almost entirely, did not know what it was attempting, or even that it was making any attempt. Chaucer<sup>1</sup> makes no apology for his early prose as he does for his verse: it is true that his prose is by no means very much in need of any, but consciousness of this is far less likely to have been the reason of the silence than unconsciousness of the existence of any standard, such as was felt, in the other case, to crave or get attainment, or to be, if possible, surpassed. Caxton feels vaguely that French is a "fair language," and that English (at least *his* English) is not, Pecoock and the translators of the *Imitation* feel that English vocabulary needs a great deal of supplementing. Fisher applies some of the tricks and figures of the traditional rhetoric to the exornation of the vernacular. Once Chaucer, whether knowingly or not knowingly, makes his prose definitely rhythmical, in a wrong direction, by stuffing or dredging it with blank verse. Once again, in a major instance Malory certainly, and others in minor instances probably, adopt a more cunning manipulation of verse-rhythm, so as to make it genuine but beautiful prose. Yet this, like the whole character of his masterpiece—the one masterpiece of the entire Middle English

<sup>1</sup> If anybody says here or elsewhere, "You have said all this before," I can only allege the novelty of the whole subject. "What is told three times" is perhaps not necessarily "true," or at least more true, for that, but unless the teller is very clumsy, and the hearer preternaturally quick or preternaturally slow, it ought to be more clear. I wish to "couple up" the history as distinctly and in as many different ways as may be legitimately possible.

period in prose—is, as it were, a blessed accident, a chance-medley of man and hour, with gracious result

On the other hand, in the long procession of centuries earlier, though it is hardly possible to point to any achieved pattern of prose-rhythm or of prose, not a little material, and even some method, had been, however unconsciously, amassed. If we have not been able to work out, in such detail as was once hoped, that interesting suggestion<sup>1</sup> as to the influence of Anglo-Saxon verse upon Middle and Modern English prose, there is fortunately no necessity to abandon it as altogether, or even to any great degree, a mistake. I believe it to be the fact that alliteration does play a greater part in our later prose than it did in our earliest, excluding, of course, prose-verse or verse-prose like Ælfric's. I believe that trochaic rhythm is more conspicuous in modern English prose of the elaborate kind than it is in modern English verse. And it is certain that what would once have been called the irregularity—what it is better to call the extreme freedom in correspondence—of Anglo-Saxon verse, reflects itself to some extent in that of the *kola* of modern English prose, while balance and parallelism, and what we have called the telescopic arrangement of clause, certainly appear in the two, and may bear a relation of inheritance. Undoubtedly Anglo-Saxon verse and modern English prose are more like each other than the former is like modern English verse.

But we must not omit to resume once more the characteristics and achievements of Anglo-Saxon prose itself. Its extreme earliness, its use for businesslike and for literary purposes at a time when almost every other European nation took refuge in Latin, is a very remarkable point. The early elaboration, so easy-looking, but by its rarity, shown to be so difficult, of a simple narrative style like that of *Apollonius*, is another. But the most remarkable for our purpose is a third, different from these.

This is the early, the abundant, the quite evidently conscious and deliberate adoption of highly rhythmical

<sup>1</sup> *V sup* pp 10 and 11 note

prose by these our ancestors. It is, of course, easy to say, as has been sometimes said, that this is mainly or merely imitation of a tendency of the Latin of the Dark Ages as we find it in Martianus Capella and Sidonius Apollinaris and Venantius Fortunatus. There is no need to deny—as indeed there could hardly be any object in denying—a possible indebtedness of suggestion, for all these writers, and some others like them, were undoubtedly earlier than our Old English prose-poets, while Martianus was certainly, and the others were probably, well known to them. But while these were equally known in other countries, they did not produce the same effect in other vernaculars,<sup>1</sup> and what is even more important, the whole character of Old English rhythm is so different from that of Latin that imitation, beyond mere suggestion, is impossible. As to the positive artistic value of such work as Ælfric's alliterative and counter-stressed prose, opinions may differ, but I cannot conceive any sober critic denying that the presence of such work, and its proportion in a not very extensive literature, is a phenomenon which must be taken into consideration, especially when we remember what later stages of the same language have done in the seventeenth century and in the nineteenth. I am quite careless of the reproach of vulgar patriotism when I say that we have the most glorious ornate prose in Europe, I think that I am historically secure when I say that we have also the earliest<sup>1</sup>

But before these later stages could be reached—long before they actually were—the language itself had to go through processes of disorganisation and reorganisation which made an elaborate prose for a long time impossible. In almost the last moments of the life of pure Anglo-Saxon—in the closing passages of the *Chronicle* far into the twelfth century—the old tongue showed its already-mentioned grasp of simple, straightforward narration. A

<sup>1</sup> The chief competitors that might perhaps be adduced as against the two propositions above are Irish, Old High German, and Icelandic. But the last named does not produce elaborate prose till the twelfth or thirteenth century, the Irish dates are extremely uncertain, and Notker is slightly junior to Ælfric, as well as less advanced.

fairly full and formed command of Middle English, for this and other purposes, appears in the interesting group of "those about" Chaucer, well before the end of the fourteenth. But between the two we have, as has been shown in detail, little or nothing, with the *Ancren Riwle* for exception, proving this other generalisation. Not merely has the blend of language itself to be mixed, to ferment, and to mature, but it is hardly applied in prose save to the most limited and stereotyped use. The late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries removed the reproach, but in no very audacious or successful fashion, and they have been sufficiently dealt with.

The test of consciousness, applied to the beginners in the great Elizabethan school, yields results in two different ways. With any deliberate intention to improve upon their predecessors, as with any serious or historically co-ordinated knowledge of those predecessors, they cannot be credited. Except in the way of a vague reverence for Chaucer—which one of them, Wilson, pretty certainly did not share, while we may have grave doubts about its being shared by Ascham—it is but too probable that they exemplified and exaggerated the deplorable, but perhaps inevitable, ignorance and contempt of the Renaissance generally for the older vernaculars. But they redeemed this by an honest and manly desire and endeavour to rescue, as they thought, the honour of their mother tongue by new work, inspired as much as possible by study of classical models, but not (according to their famous fad) borrowing from these models to an extent endangering "bankruptcy." That there may have been a certain amount of mere mannerliness—something like the mincings of a modest maiden in the days when she was asked to "sit down to the instrument"—in Ascham's protestations as to writing in English is possible. But he had been elaborately taught and elaborately exercised in writing Latin, he had not been taught or exercised in writing English.

As soon as he and other persons began to "go and do it" their sense of difficulty—at least of the difficulty of

doing anything good—if it really existed, must have vanished at once. The *Paston Letters* had shown, as we have shown from them, that even two, nay three, generations earlier, in the most unliterary people's hands or mouths, the vernacular had quite got out of mere rusticity or childish babblement. What the unlearned could do, the learned, so soon as they chose, could do much better, and there is certainly no sign of strain or of "translation-in-the-head" in *Toxophilus* or in the freer parts of Wilson's *Rhetoric*. Moreover, as soon as these learned men began to write English, they could not but apply to it those lessons for the cultivation and exornation of style which existed in the ancient languages. They could not be content, as Caxton had been (if indeed he was), with a vague discomfort over the sense that other languages were "fairer" than English, or, as Ascham was not, with a pedantic-Pharisaic conclusion that English composition was, and must be, "mean." It was their business to make English "fair," to make it cease to be "mean," and they were furnished by the ancients themselves with analyses and praxes of the art of elaboration and beautification. On one obvious device these ancients, while admitting its existence and power, had taught them to look with distrust, and they accordingly denounced "ink-horn terms." But they were not warned against "figures," and they used them, they found elaborate passages about rhythm, and though these were excessively difficult of direct application to English, something similar might be attained.

On the most obvious, universal, and perennial instrument of this—balanced and antithetic arrangement of clause—they could not fail to hit, almost without teachers, while the secular and ineradicable tendency of the language drove them to adopt what the ancients had used little, because *their* race-spirit did not drive them to it—alliteration. And before long the influence of Biblical translation enabled them, as few if any other European nations were enabled, to substitute for the harder and more mechanical balance, a subtler and more evasive but

infinitely more musical parallelism, which permeated the whole literary language. Immense influence was also exercised, in a direction running rather contrary to the principles of the Cambridge school, by the flood of neologisms which translators, poets, pamphleteers, writers of all kinds, began to pour into the vocabulary, and in the later years of the century, yet before the greatest literary outburst of its last two decades or fifteen years, we find at least two authors to whom the rather odious, but as yet unreplaced, word "stylist" unquestionably applies. These two—Lyly and Hooker—opposed to each other in everything but their obvious attention to style itself, yet stand side by side at the head of the ever-increasing procession of craftsmen in English prose.

It is with these two and with their contemporaries and followers, throwing back a little to the Biblical translations, which did not, however, exhibit their full rhythmical magnificence till both Lyly and Hooker were dead, that the elaborate mode of English prose, only to be properly analysed by quantification, comes into existence, and continues to produce examples of varying, and for some time ever-increasing, beauty during the best part of a century. Side by side with it, there goes on perfecting itself, in a different but parallel way, the plainer style which aims little or not at all at rhythm, and which, though susceptible of quantification and foot-division, presents both less obviously, and sometimes hardly requires them at all. For the beautiful sentence, as Dionysius pointed out long ago, depends on minor beauties of phrase and word and even letter. And these subsidiary but ever important beauties challenge attention, insist that you shall pronounce them with the lips and turn them over with the tongue, if not of your body, of your mind. Such pronunciation, still more such turning over, cannot exist without the appreciation of the length and shortness, the emphasis or slur, the pause or "carry-over" of the individual syllable, and the instant that this takes place, scansion comes irresistibly with it. On the other hand, the plainer style, where the conveyance of the



meaning is the thing solely or mainly aimed at, admits of, in fact prefers, merely *logical* emphasis—the integers or closely connected groups of sense, not those of sound, engage the attention. And though at this time the close-packed nature of the meaning itself, and the evident sententiousness, preserve an obvious foot-division to some extent, we shall find that later, and during the triumph of plainness in the next period, this division, though never perhaps actually absent, tends to merge itself into long and largely slurred sections, rhythmically little remarkable except at their close.

For the Interchapter dealing with that period remarks on the minor rhythmical (or *arrhythmic*) characteristics of this plainer style will be best reserved. We may here chiefly confine ourselves to those of the ornate. In the numerous and wonderful examples of this, which have been accumulated and analysed in the three preceding chapters, one thing must be clear to all careful observers, and that is the Cleopatra-like *variety* of this style. In Raleigh and Greville and Donne, in Taylor and Browne and Milton, in others of three generations down to Glanvill and Thomas Burnet, nothing is more remarkable than the absence of those “moulds” which present themselves in even the finest eighteenth-century style. If any writer for a time seems to use one he breaks it soon, while in the greatest of all, Browne, there seems to be none at all—the inexhaustibly plastic fingers have no need of the slightest assistance of model, the faintest suggestion of previously used means and previously achieved effect. Hardly anywhere, perhaps, is this unconquerable variety more noticeable than in the actual parallelisms of the Authorised Version, when you compare them with balanced pairs or batches in members of the opposite class so distant from each other in time, subject, spirit as Ascham and Gibbon, Jonson and Johnson. No motive is merely repeated, or allowed to remain *unfugued* and yet the whole, however polyphonic, never, in the best examples, which are not occasional purple patches, but constantly met with and integral constituents of the

style, loses symphony For some reason or other, the power of appreciating concerted harmonies in articulate and sense-bearing language, seems to be much rarer than that of enjoying music proper Yet it is certain that the tens who appreciate the close of the *Urn Burial*, or that sentence of Glanvill's, receive as keen and as systematic a pleasure as the tens of thousands who listen to Beethoven or Bach

These remarks may perhaps excite—though they have as a matter of fact partly answered it by anticipation—a demand somewhat of the nature of a grumble “This,” the reader may say, “is all very fine, but can you not, after this display of history, and this parade of quantitative analysis, give us some general rules by which the fine effects are attained—some prose-forms corresponding to the recognised forms of verse, or some laws answering to those which govern the musical effects to which you have compared them?” Alas! (though to my own mind there is no need for any regret in the matter except for disappointed expectations) I cannot, and whether anybody will ever be able to do so I very gravely doubt In the first place, let me remind the reader, according to a hint just given, that what apparently makes the charm of prose rhythm is *not* Uniformity but Variety, and that, as has just been said, this greatest prose of English has the greatest variety of any prose, and to all appearance is greatest in other ways just because of that very fact

In the second place, let him remember that none of the great Greek and Roman critics, who as we saw employed these same methods of analysis, in languages as indisputably as perhaps ours is only disputably (certainly *disputedly*) suited to them,—that neither Aristotle nor Quintilian, neither Cicero nor Longinus, succeeded in indicating more than certain apparent virtues of certain feet in certain places,<sup>1</sup> or was able to give us a formula or prescription for making rhythmical prose, though they

<sup>1</sup> For something similar to *this*, (and perhaps a little more) see Appendix III On Latin formulæ see Appendix II

were able, as I think we have been able, to show, in some cases, how rhythmical prose has actually been made

Not till that re-examination of the plain style which has been promised can we perhaps pursue part of this subject to advantage, but on other parts something must be said here. The great ornate prose which we have examined, in its greatest examples more especially, bears out most amply that saying of the elders, that "from prose no rhythm is excluded." It bears out no less the caution that no rhythm should be too much repeated, or presented in too absolutely complete a fashion. We have got in some cases—we could probably get in almost all—examples more or less fragmentary, and so instructive in their fragmentariness, of rhythms or *all but* metres, as complicated as those which Quintilian admits, Ionic and Sotadic and Galliambic—as well as still more complicated sodalities, of every foot from pyrrhic to dochmiac, which possess no congeners in verse. These have been, in the examples, examined and arranged as best might be. Opinions may, of course, differ as to the gain of the proceeding. Opinions may, and perhaps should, differ more widely still as to the accuracy of its details. But it has been taken from two points of view which seemed to the writer to be worth taking. One is that of the pure historian—the governing principle of which is that it is always profitable to know what did happen, to disengage the fact from the mere appearance, and, above all, to sift and riddle out, from the confused crowd of facts, something not confused and so more stimulating.

The other point is that of the pure æsthetic—the person who prefers not to "like grossly," but to get as far as may be at the reasons of his liking. He knows—none better—that this is not very far, that he will be met sooner or later, and in this case very particularly sooner, by the impenetrable and insurmountable wall<sup>1</sup> on which

<sup>1</sup> If you could get over this wall, would you be any better off? I have never seen any discussion of the most mysterious of mediæval stories, that of Gauterus (Wright's *Latin Stories*, No. L. p. 48, Percy Society, 1842), who sought a place *ubi semper gauderet, et nullam molestiam in carne nec in corde sustineret*. He tried various promising situations, where he was offered a beautiful wife,

is written, "No farther" The end of all things is bafflement, but it is good not to be baffled too soon

These Interchapters are intended to lead up to a Conclusion, and it would be a mistake to anticipate too much of what is to be said there, as well as what is to follow more immediately But it may at least be observed that before the stop is reached there is plenty to be done and enjoyed The greater passages—and, for the matter of that, the lesser, and all of them—can be laid out in regular partition, where the harp and the psaltery and the dulcimer, and all kinds of prose music, will be found to have each, as Pecoock says, "his proper-to-him" place and office When that partition is mastered, to go over it will, to the right ears and fingers, give a similar pleasure to that given by playing and hearing a piece of music which you have not made for yourself, and which you could not make for yourself You may even, though I think you will never upset the general system, make independent repartitions of it

And, if you have the true historical spirit, you will go on without grutch or grumble to see what people did when they lost the secret of this polyphony, or were weary of the taste of its delight, and tried for something else

---

a great kingdom, a Palace of Delights, etc., but in each case there was an unpleasant bed, surrounded with ferocious animals, in which he had to sleep At last he found an old man sitting at the foot of a high wall, against which leant a convenient ladder The old man said that this led to what he wanted *Ascendens ergo Gauterus quae diu quaesierat invenit* I have always thought that he probably broke his neck, though if anybody else thinks this an uncomfortable ending, our old friends the Deadly Sins, and a hint at the Trinity—for the wall is "three staged"—will provide something more in the common allegorising way of the *Gesta* and their likes, and there will be *quies in coelo*

## CHAPTER VIII

### AUGUSTAN PROSE

The prevailing of the plain style—The group of 1630—Distribution of the chapter—Cowley—Dryden—South—Halifax—Temple and his masterpiece—The plainest styles, vulgar and not vulgar—The non-vulgarians, L'Estrange and Tom Brown—Bunyan—The vulgarians—The effect of abbreviations—Instances from Rymer, etc—Defoe—Swift—The rhythmical character of irony—Addison—Hurd's dealings with his rhythm—His supposed "Addisonian termination"—His general view of Addison's "harmony"—Specimens of Addison himself—Rhythmical analysis of them—Selections of other Queen Anne men necessary—Berkeley—Shaftesbury—Bolingbroke—Letter-writers and novelists to be shortly dealt with—Conyers Middleton—Efforts at variety—Adam Smith—Interim observations on this prose—Attempts to raise it—Johnson different views respecting him—His relation to Browne—Characteristics of the Johnsonian style—Burke his oratorical *ethos*—His declared method—Early examples—Middle—Later—Examples and comments—Gibbon his peculiarity—Its general effect, and that of the other reformers—The standard Georgian style—Southey

WE have seen, in the last two chapters, how, between 1600 and 1660, a sort of underground, and, as the French would say, *sourd*, conflict went on between the style or styles of prose which carried the use of rhythm almost to its farthest possible, and that or those which, without entirely disregarding it (for there will hardly be found an example of any such at this time), did not make it a chief object, neglected its finer and more elaborate forms, and used few of its more notable figures and schemes except balance. The state of things is not very different from that which prevailed contemporaneously in verse,

and its results were also in a way not dissimilar But only in a way For in the verse-case, a deliberate, if more or less unconscious, change of taste seems to have been at the bottom of the thing, people really persuaded themselves, extraordinary as it may seem to us, that the stopped couplet was not merely the neatest and most useful, but the sweetest and the most splendid form of verse

In prose, though there must have been something of the same kind at work, the main motives and influences were different People wanted to do different things, and accordingly used different implements The famous and epoch-making passage<sup>1</sup> of Sprat does not directly touch on rhythm, and it is not very probable that the future bishop, the actual versifier and friend of Cowley, thought directly about it But elaborate rhythmical arrangement is quite evidently one of the things which are not wanted in scientific discussion, and which, if anybody is in the unfortunate mood to do so, may be stigmatised as "beautiful deceits"

At any rate it is certain that among the most remarkable group of prose writers who were all born about 1630,<sup>2</sup> the contrast which we have discussed and illustrated in the last two chapters evolves itself further, or rather almost ceases to be a contrast, and becomes a merely one-sided development Of all the group only Temple (who by the way was actually the "eldest hand") achieves, or appears to have cared to achieve, anything like elaborate descants in prose Halifax (whether it were Halifax or Coventry does not in the very least matter to us) would almost seem to have gone out of his way to illustrate the phenomenon we are discussing by producing a pendant to Milton's splendid passage on Truth South, a man of great eloquence and even rather antique in his use of phrase and figure, expressly belabours

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Royal Society* (London, 1667), p. 111 sq. It will be found in Sir Henry Craik's *English Prose Selections* (London, 1894), III 271, 272

<sup>2</sup> Dryden, 1631, Halifax, 1633, Locke, 1632, South, 1634, Temple, 1628; Tillotson, 1630

and condemns<sup>1</sup> the rhythmical splendours of Taylor, and himself employs hardly anything but a balanced parallelism of cadence Tillotson is plainer and more "prosaic" than any of these, and as for the two most famous of the group, Dryden, capable of positive and varied magnificence in verse, and able to give the stopped couplet a variety of cadence and temper which it had never attained before, and has never regained since, sets himself to attain, and does attain, in prose a manner in rhythm as in all other ways, now easy, now forcible, now combative, now playful, admirably suited for narrative, and as admirably for exposition or argument, but essentially conversational, and, in virtue of that very quality, expressly eschewing and almost ostentatiously abjuring the complicated fugue-solos of the generation of his youth While<sup>2</sup> Locke, whatever may be his merits in other ways irrelevant to us, for almost the first time makes English prose positively *mean* in every point of style, and in rhythm most of all It had stammered and shown lack of the rudiments, it had been incorrect, gaudy, unequal, awkward, dull But it had never, in the hands of a man of anything like Locke's powers, so fulfilled the words of that very intelligent patriarch, Photius, seven centuries before, when he said that the use of merely straightforward periods brings style down to flatness and meanness But we should illustrate all this and should perhaps first subdivide the long period which this chapter will include

The chapter which is to deal with practically the whole of English prose from 1660 to 1820, cannot in any case be a short one, but the want of apparent correspondence between the length of the period and the length of the chapter is not due to contempt The person who should despise not merely Dryden, Addison, Berkeley, Johnson, Burke, and Gibbon, but dozens and scores of

<sup>1</sup> Not, it is true, from the definite point of view of rhythm, which, as has been said, hardly seems to have been consciously taken by any one, except perhaps Samuel Woodford

<sup>2</sup> Some people, I know, object to this use of "while" I can only say that though they may know English *grammars*, they know very little of English grammar

other "Augustan" or quasi-Augustan writers from Temple to Southey, would be little better or no better than a fool. But, in and from the very nature of the case, description and analysis of the various modes of these authors requires much less space spent on it. It is true that one of the writers mentioned, Addison, was made by Hurd the subject of about the first and, till very recently, almost the only attempt (except Mason's) to analyse prose rhythm. But as we shall shortly see, the attempt itself was very rudimentary, it came to little or nothing, and selection of its subject may unhesitatingly be set down to the two obvious facts—that Addison was the most popular author of the time, and that Hurd was dealing with him, rather than to any special suitableness on his part for the operation. To some extent the general outlines of the style-history of these hundred and sixty years are reflected in the special history of prose rhythm. In the easier or statelier antithesis of all the group above described, except in the vulgar slovenliness of the degeneration from Rymer to Mandeville, in various efforts at reform made by Addison, Steele, Swift, Berkeley, in the drab though decent nullity of the Conyers Middleton phase, in the fresh attempts at exaltation by Johnson, Burke, Gibbon, and in the stationary state, not even yet wholly obsolete, of the standard late Georgian style—rhythm obeys the "general orders of the day," though it has altogether lost its pride of place. But illustration is wanted from individuals, and that illustration, subject to the caution put in, shall now be given.

It has been not unusual, and one need not quarrel over the matter, to discover the first signs of the conversational tone<sup>1</sup> in Cowley's Essays, none of which was written very early, but which proceeded from an older man than the members of the group so often mentioned. Cowley does not maintain it as Dryden does, and he may be said even not to attain it with perfect sureness. The old long and somewhat broken-backed sentences reappear,

<sup>1</sup> I use "tone" here in its proper sense of "sound effect" as well as in its applied one of "manner."



and as in his verse so in his prose, there is an occasional tendency to the conceited and "metaphysical" But compare the following with Bacon, Jonson, or even Burton in their lighter veins, and you will see the difference, in fact, the single italicised sentence is enough to signalise it

The first minister of state has not so much business in public, as a wise man has in private if the one have little leisure to be alone, the other has less leisure to be in company, the one has but part of the affairs of one nation, the other, all the works of God and nature under his consideration *There is no saying shocks me so much as that which I hear very often that a man does not know how to pass his time* 'Twould have been but ill spoken by Methusalem, in the nine hundred sixty-ninth year of his life, so far it is from us, who have not time enough to attain to the utmost perfection of any part of any science, to have cause to complain, that we are forced to be idle for want of work But this, you'll say, is work only for the learned, others are not capable either of the employments, or diversitements, that arrive from letters I know they are not and therefore cannot much recommend solitude to a man totally illiterate But if any man be so unlearned as to want entertainment of the little intervals of accidental solitude, which frequently occur in almost all conditions (except the very meanest of the people, who have business enough in the necessary provisions for life), it is truly a great shame, both to his parents and himself, for a very small portion of any ingenious art will stop up all those gaps of our time, either music, or painting, or designing, or chemistry, or history, or gardening, or twenty other things will do it usefully and pleasantly, and if he happen to set his affections upon poetry (which I do not advise him to immoderately), that will overdo it no wood will be thick enough to hide him from the importunities of company or business, which would abstract him from his beloved

The truth is that, as was noted above, the conversational tone excludes anything more than a hint at elaborate rhythm A man who *talked* Taylorian or Brownese would be an intolerable nuisance, and though a certain management of emphasis is permissible and even desirable in speech, its governing and directing principle must be meaning only Even in English, moreover, though not so much as in some foreign languages, well-bred conversation exacts considerable runs of unemphatic and almost unaccented syllables which can hardly be got into any rhythm, certainly not

into any rhythm capable of notation in feet And therefore it is that, except very rarely, it would be, though quite possible, almost superfluous to arrange Dryden's prose in quantitative rhythm It obeys Aristotle's dictum it is not arrhythmic—very much the reverse But, except in a very few set pieces like the great Shakespeare passage, this rhythm is kept down to almost the minimum, and where it appears it is rarely elaborated by any device except the usual balance and antithetic emphasis I enlisted myself in Dryden's service some thirty years ago, and I admire his prose almost as much as his verse But as Johnson, in his praise of Addison, points out in regard to that master, Dryden did not aim at elaborate rhythm in prose, and indeed aimed away from it in the very fact of hitting his own mark he did not hit the other So with South, an admirable writer and a great master of balance, so with Tillotson But Halifax, for the passage above noted, and Temple, for his whole conception of arrangement, should be more fully dealt with

For Dryden the best known and probably the most carefully prepared passages—those on Shakespeare and Chaucer—will do I have divided the former, but not (as a whole) the latter In the Shakespeare the remarkable variety of the parallel *κῶλα* should be noticed, and the skilful placing of the monosyllable "soul," as well as, in a less degree, "too" and "there," etc I have indicated by italics some of the "runs" of slightly quantified syllables, making six or more in a batch, referred to above

To begin then | with Shakespeare | He was the man | who of  
all | modern | and perhaps | ancient | poets | had the largest | *and*  
*most comprehensive* | soul | All the images | of nature | were still  
| present | to him, | and he drew them | not laboriously | but  
luckily | when he describes | anything | you more | than see it, |  
you feel it | too | Those who accuse him | to have wanted | learn-  
ing, | give him | the greater | commendation | *he was naturally* |  
learned, | he needed not | the spectacles of books | to read | nature,  
| he looked | inwards, | and found her | there | I cannot say | he  
is everywhere | alike, | were he so, | I should do him | injury | to  
compare him | with the greatest | of mankind | He is many  
times | flat, | insipid, | his comic | wit | degenerating | into

clenches, | his serious | swelling | into bombast | But he is  
 always | great, | when some great | occasion | is presented | to him  
 | no man | can say | he ever | had a fit | subject | for his wit | and  
 did not | then | raise himself | as high | above the rest | of poets

*Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi*

He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other, and not only in their *inclinations*, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different education, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity, their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding, such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous, some are unlearned, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different, the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady Prioress, and the broad-speaking, gap-toothed wife of Bath. But enough of this, there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not what to follow. It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great grand-dames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days, their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of monks, | and friars, | and canons, | and lady abbesses, | and nuns,<sup>1</sup> for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, though everything is altered.

For South the following will do excellently

He came into the world, a philosopher, which sufficiently appeared by his writing the nature of things upon their names, he could view essences in themselves, and read forms without the comment of their respective properties. he could see consequents yet dormant in their principles, and effects yet unborn, and in the womb of their causes his understanding could almost pierce into future contingents, his conjectures improving even to prophecy, or the certainties of pre-

<sup>1</sup> Observe one of the lengthenings and shortenings of foot length so often noted

diction, till his fall, it was ignorant of nothing but of sin, or at least it rested in the notion, without the smart of the experiment. Could any difficulty have been proposed, the resolution would have been as early as the proposal, it could not have had time to settle into doubt. Like a better Archimedes, the issue of all his inquiries was an *εύρηκα*, an *ευρηκα*, the offspring of his brain without the sweat of his brow. Study was not then a duty, night watchings were needless, the light of reason wanted not the assistance of a candle. This is the doom of fallen man, to labour in the fire, to seek truth *in profundo*, to exhaust his time and impair his health, and perhaps to spin out his days, and himself, into one pitiful, controverted conclusion. There was then no poring, no struggling with memory, no straining for invention: his faculties were quick and expedite, they answered without knocking, they were ready upon the first summons, there was freedom and firmness in all their operations. I confess, it is difficult for us, who date our ignorance from our first being, and were still bred up with the same infirmities about us with which we were born, to raise our thoughts and imagination to those intellectual perfections that attended our nature in the time of innocence, as it is for a peasant bred up in the obscurities of a cottage, to fancy in his mind the unseen splendours of a court. But by rating positives by their privatives, and other arts of reason, by which discourse supplies the want of the reports of sense, we may collect the excellency of the understanding then, by the glorious remainders of it now, and guess at the stateliness of the building, by the magnificence of its ruins. All those arts, rarities, and inventions, which vulgar minds gaze at, the ingenious pursue, and all admire, are but the reliques of an intellect defaced with sin and time. We admire it now, only as antiquaries do a piece of old coin, for the stamp it once bore, and not for those vanishing lineaments and disappearing draughts that remain upon it at present. And certainly that must needs have been very glorious, the decays of which are so admirable. He that is comely when old and decrepid, surely was very beautiful when he was young. An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise.

The contrasted character noted above may here be seen in perfection—the comparative archaism of some of the diction, the occasional metaphysicality of the thought,—but, on the other hand, the new polished balance of the rhythm, which often reaches not merely the usual double contrast (“the obscurities of a cottage      the splendours of a court”), but the full Johnsonian intricacy of *triple-rowed* equivalence

|                |                       |               |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| { An Aristotle | { was but the rubbish | { of an Adam, |
| { and Athens   | { but the rudiments   | { of Paradise |

South, it will be observed, is not afraid of alliteration, though he does not push it to Lylyan extremes

These passages deserve plenty of study, but there is more "curiosity," in the modern sense, about the Truth passage of Halifax

Our *Trimmer* adores the Goddess Truth, tho' in all ages she has been scurvily used, as well as those that worshipped her 'Tis of late become such a ruming virtue, that mankind seems to be agreed to commend and avoid it, yet the want of practice, which repeals the other laws, has no influence upon the law of Truth, because it has root in heaven, and an intrinsic value in itself that can never be impaired she shows her greatness in this, that her enemies, even when they are successful, are ashamed to own it Nothing but power full of truth has the prerogative of triumphing, not only after victories, but in spite of them, and to put conquest herself out of countenance She may be kept under and suppressed, but her dignity still remains with her, even when she is in chains Falsehood, with all her impudence, has not enough to speak ill of her before her face, such majesty she carries about her, that her most prosperous enemies are fain to whisper their treason, all the power upon the earth can never extinguish her, she has lived in all ages, and let the mistaken zeal of prevailing authority christen any opposition to it with what name they please, she makes it not only an ugly and an unmannerly, but a dangerous thing to persist She has lived very retired indeed, nay, sometimes so buried, that only some few of the discerning parts of mankind could have a glimpse of her, with all that, she has eternity in her, she knows not how to die, and from the darkest clouds that shade and cover her, she breaks from time to time with triumph for her friends, and terror to her enemies

I have always thought that whoever wrote this must of a certainty have known the parallel passage in the *Areopagitica* (*v sup* p 170), and may not impossibly have designed emulation of it At all events the reader will find it by no means uninteresting to look back and compare the two The writer has even kept—to the loss and damage of an otherwise fine period—the provoking Miltonic *addition* "she shows own it" He has achieved a really fine piece of rhetorical prose, with a rhythm sufficient for any Rhetoric that does not approach the line dividing its own dominions from those of Poetry But the musical accompaniment, the concert of the plain of Dura—that has gone utterly, and nothing remains

with us but oratorical balance, varied enough and effective enough, but with no magic about it, only an excellent cleverness

The position of the wonderful sentence which has been already referred to as giving, of itself, a position, by himself, to Sir William Temple, is an odd one. There is nothing else like it in his work, though the longer passage which has led up to it is itself in part, but in part only, somehow different from the work of most of the group, and here and there suggestive, not indeed of Browne or Taylor, but of Walton. It will probably be best to give the whole

Whether it be that the fierceness of the Gothic humours, or noise of their perpetual wars, frightened it away, or that the unequal mixture of the modern languages would not bear it, certain it is, that the great heights and excellency both of poetry and music fell with the Roman learning and empire, and have never since recovered the admiration and applauses that before attended them. Yet, such as they are amongst us, they must be confessed to be the softest and sweetest, the most general and most innocent amusements of common time and life. They still find room in the Courts of Princes, and the cottages of shepherds. They serve to revive and animate the dead calm of poor or idle lives, and to allay or divert the violent passions and perturbations of the greatest and the busiest men. And both these effects are of equal use to human life, for the mind of man is like the sea, which is neither agreeable to the beholder nor the voyager in a calm or in a storm, but is so to both when a little agitated by gentle gales, and so the mind, when moved by soft and easy passions and affections. I know very well, that many, who pretend to be wise by the forms of being grave, are apt to despise both poetry and music as toys and trifles too light for the use or entertainment of serious men. But, whoever find themselves wholly insensible to these charms, would, I think, do well to keep their own counsel, for fear of reproaching their own temper, and bringing the goodness of their natures, if not of their understandings, into question, it may be thought at least an ill sign, if not an ill constitution, since some of the fathers went so far as to esteem the love of music a sign of predestination, as a thing divine, and reserved for the felicities of heaven itself. While this world lasts, I doubt not but the pleasure and requests of these two entertainments will do so too, and happy those that content themselves with these, or any other so easy and so innocent, and do not trouble the world, or other men, because they cannot be quiet themselves, though no body hurts them!

When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over

A most curious *macédoine*<sup>1</sup> One might be inclined to pish and pshaw about the fierceness of the Gothic humours, about the excellence of the Roman poetry, of which Sir William did not know very much, and that of the Roman music, of which he, like everybody else, must have been almost wholly ignorant But the opening sentence is a good one in the modern style, and those that follow are still better Nay, when you get to "the mind of man is like the sea" you half wonder whether this genteel writer is going somehow to produce something better than balance, something more exquisite than ease with dignity The doubt—a wholly agreeable, if still unsatisfied, doubt—continues for the rest of the paragraph, to change for a moment only, but a moment of delight, with the brief *coda* Here the Muses were indeed good to Sir William, perhaps for his somewhat blundering but well-intentioned championship of the youth of their immortality The thing is not in the ineffable key of Browne or Donne, it has not the magnificence of Milton or the floriation of Taylor, but it has the homeliness and friendliness which are the best sides of the Augustan period when it has "off-stilted" a little, combined with something *antiker Form sich nahernd*—something almost prose-Shakespearian

When all | is done, | human | life | is, | at the greatest | and the  
best, | but like | a froward | child | that must be played with | and  
humoured | a little | to keep it | quiet | till it falls | asleep, | and  
then | the care | is over<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It will, no doubt, occur to some that, for the last half dozen or even the last dozen words, a continuous trochaic scansion, "Keep it | quiet | till it | falls asleep, and | then the | care is | over," is possible To my mind and ear this would spoil the beauty of the passage, but that may be matter of taste What is important is the unquestionable and remarkable *difference* which these various foot scansions make It is surely impossible, in the face of such an example, to regard them as mere pedantic trifling

You may force part of this into blank-verse rhythm, but it does not come naturally, and does not in the least suit with the rest. The actual measure is mostly iambic (whence the blank-verse suggestion), but legitimately coupling itself up here and there with at least one pæon and several amphibrachs—the two great specially prose feet. It is not Corinthian at all, but it is very nearly Attic in the rhetorical order of thought, certainly Ionic in the architectural. Elsewhere Sir William, though always agreeable in tone, is not ravishing. He varies, like the rest of them, between—for his narratives and descriptions of moxas and peach-trees and German drinking bouts—the pure conversational “straightforward period” redeemed from flatness by ease and good-breeding, and, for argument and display, the balanced arrangement.

The prophetic character of the qualities which we have exhibited in this group has been hinted at already, and should be more fully brought out in the Interchapter which will follow this—we may now and here best pass to the succeeding phases as they have been scheduled above.

The Photian nemesis did not take long to show itself. Your “naked natural way” does not easily escape the fate of being also, as Hobbes, who lived nearly long enough to see the whole transformation scene, had already translated it in his disillusionising fashion, “poor and brutish.” In the very group itself which we have been discussing, Locke showed great part of the danger, and was only saved from showing the whole of it by the gravity of his subjects, and by the fortunate fact that he had no propensity to joking. But the general tendency of the age was different, and in the last quarter of the century the vulgarising of English style and English rhythm—for rhythm is like some delicate meats, it taints at once in corrupt company—is flagrant. It is not quite fair, though it has been done, to charge this on L’Estrange, and (though the eighteenth century would sometimes have done this) nobody is now likely to charge it on Bunyan. I do not think that whatever Tom Brown’s delinquencies (and they are not inconsiderable) it is fair



to charge it on Tom—who was saved in form by a little scholarship, as Bentley was not by much. The editor of the *Observer*, and the author of the *Letters from the Dead to the Living*, use slang and neologism without the slightest compunction, and though Tom at least was by no means without a vein of poetry, their subjects did not invite “high strains” of any kind. But though both, and especially Tom, can be horribly coarse in substance and diction, their rhythm is never vulgar—it is purely conversational, but of a not very polished type<sup>1</sup>.

As for Bunyan, here as everywhere, he stands quite by himself. I think he had read a good deal more than some persons of worship fancy, but there is little doubt that the common idea as to the Bible furnishing him with his only formal models is correct enough. And by special genius he had managed to combine Biblical music with the style of the most ordinary, yet never in the least vulgar, vernacular after a fashion which seems to me almost more marvellous than Browne’s weaving of the Biblical magic into his own splendour, or Taylor’s decking texts with his prettiest trills and flourishes. All these, however, really belong to the group already dealt with as far as general rhythm goes—belong to it, indeed, with a closeness which the nature of their subjects ought not to veil, though with many people it probably does.

On another group, however—of which the most prominent members are Rymer the critic, Bentley the scholar, Jeremy Collier the divine and historian, with others down to the somewhat later Mandeville,—the curse has come. Its manifestation is partly of a kind which may seem accidental, if not mechanical, but Swift, who was possessed of a tolerably acute intellect, did not think so. This is the use of colloquial contractions—a thing the destructiveness of which as regards harmony either in verse or prose is not altogether easy to account

<sup>1</sup> To see the difference, let the reader for once descend into the actual gutter, and read Ned Ward. There is not much, if anything, to choose between Ned and Tom in decency of matter, but there is everything in quality of style.

for,<sup>1</sup> and has been overlooked in the strangest and most varied fashions,<sup>2</sup> but which certainly exists. Except "'tis" (which has secured itself a singular *privilegium*, perhaps because of the exceptional ugliness of "it's") it would be difficult to mention a single contraction of the class which is not instantly fatal to verse (think of what "*I'm* dying, Egypt," would be in Antony's mouth, and of what the lower, but really in substance pathetic, "*Don't* hear me wronged" of Monimia actually is), and at least excessively dangerous to prose, unless introduced for a special purpose.

What possible harmony or rhythmical effect can you get out of the jerky vulgarity of Rymer's "Fancy leaps and frisks, and away she's gone"? out of Bentley's "But it's utterly false that Professors of it lasted longer in general than those of the others" (where the man shows his lack of ear, not merely by "it's," but by the unnecessary "in general" shoved in to spoil what little rhythm there is)? out of Collier's "*Can't* a toad spit venom because *she's* ugly"? Swift's well-known onslaught on this kind of thing in the *Tatler*<sup>3</sup> was no doubt directed rather at the vocabulary than at the rhythmical effect. But this latter is really worse than the intrinsic badness of the language. Nobody bars "it's" and "we're" in actual conversation, or in that letter-writing which is merely conversation through the post. But in book-prose they are seldom (though I'd not say never) in place. As for Mandeville, his liking for, and practice in, the actual Dialogue may make it seem rather unfair to say much of him, but he certainly belongs to the vulgar class.

Yet another isolated and remarkable writer has to be briefly dealt with before we come to the first group of reformers—Swift himself, Addison, and Steele. Defoe, however, does not from our present point of view, though he certainly does from others, stand in any very different position, ~~now~~ from the least specially rhythmical of the

<sup>1</sup> Familiar, and therefore contemptible, if not contemptible, association is only a part cause. But it is evident that contraction must in any case, and of necessity, *change* rhythm.

<sup>2</sup> As, for instance, by those who prefer elision to substitution in prosody.

<sup>3</sup> No 230 Sept 28, 1710

Dryden group, now from the least vulgar of the others. In his abundant dialogue-work he is less rough than Mandeville, but hardly more ambitious. When, on the other hand, he attempts, as in most of his novels, and in *Robinson* rather specially, set passages of description or otherwise, he advances this style, by the aid of balance, quite after the general fashion.

From the paper above cited, and from other things of his,<sup>1</sup> it is quite certain that Swift deliberately meditated a reform of prose, and his influence on his friends was so extraordinarily germinal and *protreptic* that he may well be credited with some upon Addison's performance. But his own protest, as has been said, was mainly, if not wholly, confined to diction. As to practice, his temper, his age, and his preferred subjects, necessarily confined him to a plain style—a style in a way the plainest of the plain. But partly the general tendency of his great ironic gift, and partly his special genius, brought about a peculiarity, strictly rhythmical, which, though not quite absent from some passages of that "Cousin Dryden" to whom "Cousin Swift" was so ungrateful, is first found eminently in Swift himself, and has probably been to some extent imitated from him, directly or indirectly, by all who have displayed it since.

The essence of irony, when irony itself is in quintessence, is quietness. If the ostensible expression attracts too much notice to itself by clangour of sound, or by flamboyance of colour, the inner meaning has no (or at least less) opportunity to slip its presence into the reader's mind, and its sting into the enemy's body. Hence it is almost impossible for the ironist to be too grave, in rhythm as in all other points. In such passages as the address to Prince Posterity in *The Tale of a Tub*, and almost the whole of the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity* and the *Modest Proposal*, the subjects, and even to some extent the styles, are widely different. The *Address* starts with the roundest mouth, puts on an apparent stateliness. The *Argument*, as befits its theme, has much

<sup>1</sup> The *Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue*, for instance

of the same quality The *Proposal* is wildly burlesque in substance, and specially homely, though not in the least vulgar, in phrase But all of them equally abstain from the slightest noisiness (we want a better word for *tapage*) in cadence as in diction A well-bred absence of emphasis distinguishes all The clauses are neatly but not obtrusively balanced, there are none of the sharp pulls-up, or the variations of final sound, which even Augustan writers permit themselves, and, in their highest strains, even seek The whole glides along in a smooth and deadly flood, like that of Till in the old rhyme It is just the same with the most withering passages of Gulliver In prose as in verse (with one memorable and not demonstrably certain exception)<sup>1</sup> Swift never raises his voice His prose is never, to a sound taste well cultivated, inharmonious, or monotonous, or mean, but there never, in English, has been a prose in which harmony was secured with so few means taken to secure it, and monotony avoided with so little apparent effort to safeguard the avoidance A single example may suffice

I profess | to your highness, | in the integrity | of my heart, |  
that what | I am going | to say | is literally | true | this minute | I  
am writing what revolutions may happen before it shall be ready  
for your perusal, I can by no means warrant however, I beg you  
to accept it as a specimen | of our learning, | our politeness, | and  
our wit | I do therefore affirm, upon the word of a sincere man, that  
there is now actually in being a certain poet, called John Dryden,  
whose translation of Virgil was lately printed in a large folio, well  
bound, and, if diligent search were made, for aught I know, is yet  
to be seen There is another, called Nahum Tate, who is ready to  
make oath, that he has caused many reams of verse to be published,  
whereof both himself and his bookseller (if lawfully required) can  
still produce authentic copies, and therefore wonders why the world  
is pleased to make such a secret of it There is a third, known by  
the name of Tom Durfey, a poet of a vast comprehension, a universal  
genius, and most profound learning There are also one Mr Rymer,

<sup>1</sup> Not that I myself have the least doubt as to Swift's authorship of the "Last Judgment" lines, the transmission of which we owe to Chesterfield The internal evidence is overwhelming, and while Chesterfield, great as were his wits, could not possibly have written them himself, he was neither careless, nor a mystifier, nor ill informed But the certainty—morally as strong as possible, and hardly less so critically—falls short of both logical and legal requirements

and one Mr Dennis, most profound critics There is a person styled Dr Bentley, who has written near a thousand pages of immense erudition, giving a full and true account of a certain squabble, of wonderful importance, between himself and a bookseller, he is a writer of infinite wit and humour, no man rallies with a better grace, and in more sprightly turns Further, | I avow | to your highness, | that with these eyes | I have beheld | the person | of William | Wotton, | B | D, | who has written | a good | sizeable | volume | against a friend | of your governor | (from whom, alas ! he must therefore look for little favour), in a most gentlemanly style, adorned with the utmost politeness and civility, replete with discoveries equally valuable for their novelty and use, and embellished with traits of wit, so poignant and so apposite, that he is a worthy yokemate to his forementioned friend

I have marked a few passages of this only, because it seemed unnecessary to do more No reader with any ear can fail to notice the unostentatious *undulation* of the scheme now rising from dissyllabic or monosyllabic feet through trisyllabic to pæons or even dochmiacs, now reversing the process, but in no case transcending a sort of grave oratorical rhythm—or a quiet caricature thereof

The positive achievement of Addison in prose-form must in any case have assured him no small place here, and his immense and prolonged influence might have challenged such a place if he had been less intrinsically good But even if his deserts from either point of view, or both, had been very much less, the position (already more than once glanced at) which he holds, as having been the first English writer on whose work a commentator bestowed special attention from the rhythmical point of view, would have made him all important to us We shall, indeed, take this side first, because it is first in its own division

Hurd's first note<sup>1</sup> on Addison's rhythm starts with a

<sup>1</sup> On *Spec* 94 See Bohn edition of Addison, vol. II pp. 416, 417 But I append the passage

"Which the prophet took a distinct view of] This way of throwing the preposition to the end of a sentence, is among the peculiarities of Mr Addison's manner, and was derived from his nice ear The secret deserves to be explained The English tongue is naturally grave and majestic The rhythm corresponds to the genius of it, and runs, almost whether we will or no, into iambs But the continuity of this solemn measure has an ill effect where the subject is not of moment Mr Addison's delicate ear made him sensible of this defect in the rhythm of our language, and sug-

misconception which, in a man of the Bishop's reading and critical power,<sup>1</sup> shows how very ignorant his generation was of the history of English language and literature. Of course, the preposition at the end of the sentence is no peculiarity of Addison's, but an old and genuinely English idiom which pedantry has at different times condemned, but which no one who really knows his mother tongue will hesitate to use when he pleases. It has often recently been pointed out that one of the most curious differences between the first and the later editions of Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is the removal of the preposition (probably in mistaken deference to French usage) from the end. But this matters very little—nothing at all, indeed—to Hurd's rhythmical criticism. This, though it shows a creditable application of the principles of Cicero and Quintilian certainly, and perhaps of Aristotle and Longinus, to English, is, as was natural, a little rudimentary.

Hurd is, of course, perfectly right, though not in the

---

gested to him the proper cure for it, which was, to break the continued iambic measure, especially at the end of a sentence, where the weight of it would be most felt, by a *preposition*, or other short word, of no emphasis in the sense, and without accent, thrown into that part whence a trochee, being introduced into the place of an iambus, would give that air of negligence, and what the French call 'legerete,' which, in a work of gaiety or elegance, is

found so taking. For instance, had the author said, 'of which the prophet took a distinct view,' the metre had been wholly iambic, or, what is worse, would have been loaded with a spondee in the last foot, and the accent must have fallen, with solemnity, on the word 'view'. But by reserving the preposition 'of' to the end of the sentence, he gains this advantage, that 'view of' becomes a trochee, and the ear is not only relieved by the variety, but escapes the 'actus' of a too important close. For the same reason, he frequently terminates a sentence, or a paragraph, by such unpretending

phrases as, *of it—of him—to her—from them*, etc., which have the same effect on the ear (the accent, here, falling on the preposition), and give a careless air to the rhythm, exactly suited to the subject and genius of these little essays though the common reader, who does not enter into the beauty of this contrivance, is ready to censure the author, as wanting nerves and force.

"In the *formal style*, it is evident, this liberty should be sparingly used, but in *conversation*, in *letters*, in *narratives*, and, universally, in all the lighter forms of composition, the *Addisonian termination*, as we may call it, has an extreme grace."

<sup>1</sup> For a vindication of this from a trick of undervaluing him which repays his own ignorance in kind, see *Hist. Crit.* iii. 72-80.

least original, in declaring the *general* rhythm of English to be iambic, and he is equally right, and rather more original, in desiderating substitution of other feet, though one may smile (to be smiled at in return no doubt, by others hereafter, if there be a hereafter for this book) at the "air of taking negligence" given by a single trochee. But in applying this principle he "sticks in the bark" remarkably. His "wholly iambic" observation, on his own scanning, would require an accentuation of "distinct" which was pretty certainly no more usual in his time than in ours. Indeed, his horrified suggestion of a spondee seems to admit this. He gives no reason why accent should not, or why it must, "fall, *with solemnity*, on the word 'view,'" and he clearly never thought of, and would doubtless have regarded with horror, the scansion "[ā distinct | view |]," which is pretty certainly the right one. But he is perfectly right as to the different effects of iambic and trochaic endings, though, as was noted above, the assumption that it is an "Addisonian termination" would seem to argue a beginning of study of English prose with Addison himself, and an ignoring of all that had gone before.<sup>1</sup>

Hurd's other passage on Addison's rhythm is very much longer, but, long as it is, it must be given,<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> I suspect that, great as was the authority of Dryden's *verse* in Hurd's day, the *prose* was little read.

<sup>2</sup> On *Spec* 409, *ed cit sup* iii 389 391.

"A man who has any relish for fine writing ] [This mystery of fine writing (more talked of than understood) consists chiefly in three things. 1 In a choice of *fit* terms. 2 In such a *construction* of them as agrees to the grammar of the language in which we write. And, 3 In a pleasing *order and arrangement* of them. By the *first* of these qualities, a style becomes what we call *elegant*, by the *second*, *exact*, and, by the *third*, *harmonious*. Each of these qualities may be possessed by itself, but they must concur, to form a finished style.

"(Mr Addison was the *first*, and is still perhaps the *only*, English writer in whom these three requisites are found together, in almost an equal degree of perfection.) It is, indeed, one purpose of these cursory notes, to show that, in some few instances, he has transgressed, or rather neglected, the strict rules of *grammar*, which yet, in general, he observes with more care than any other of our writers. But, in the *choice of his terms* (which is the most essential point of all), and in the *numbers of his style*, he is almost faultless, or rather admirable.

"It will not be easy for the reader to comprehend the merit of Mr Addison's

commented on with some fulness It will be observed that Cicero and Quintilian, rather than the Greeks, are, as was above suggested, Hurd's guides Yet he has not

prose, in these three respects, if he has not been conversant in the best rhetorical writings of the ancients, and especially in those parts of Cicero's and Quintilian's works which treat of what they call *composition* But, because the *harmony* of his style is exquisite, and this praise is peculiar to himself, it may be worth while to consider in what it chiefly consists

"1 This secret charm of *numbers* is effected by a certain arrangement of words in the *same sentence*, that is, by putting such words together as read easily and are pronounced without effort, while, at the same time, they are so tempered by different *sounds* and *measures*, as to affect the ear with a sense of *variety*, as well as sweetness As, to take the first sentence in the following essay '*Our sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses*' If you alter it thus, '*Our sight is the perfectest and most delightful of all our senses*,' though the change be only of one word, the difference is very sensible, *perfectest* being a word of difficult pronunciation, and rendered still harsher by the subsequent word *most*, which echoes to the termination *est*

"Or, again, read thus—'*Our sight is the most perfect and most pleasing of all our senses*'—Here, the predominance of the vowel *e*, and the alliteration of the two adjectives, *perfect* and *pleasing*, with the repetition of the superlative sign '*most*,' occasions too great a *sameness* or similarity of sound in the constituent parts of this sentence

"Lastly, read thus—'*Our sight is the most complete and most delightful sense we have*'—But then you hurt the measure or *quantity*, which, in our language, is determined by the accent, as will appear from observing of what *feet* either sentence consists

"'*Our sight is the most complete and most-delightful sense we have*' Here, except the second foot, which is an anapaest, the rest are all of one kind, *æ iambics* Read now with Mr Addison—'*Our sight is the most perfect and most-delightful of all our senses*'—And you see how the rhythm is varied by the intermixture of other feet, besides that the short redundant syllable, *ses*, gives to the close a slight and negligent air, which has a better effect, in this place, than the proper iambic foot

"2 A sentence may be of a *considerable length* and then the rhythm arises from such a composition, as breaks the whole into different parts, and consults at the same time the melodious flow of each As in the second period of the same paper—'*It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments*'

"A single sentence should rarely consist of more than three members, and the rhythm is most complete when these rise upon and exceed each other in length and fulness of sound, till the whole is rounded by a free and measured close In this view, the rhythm of the sentence here quoted might be improved by shortening the first member, or lengthening the second, as thus—'*it fills the mind with the most ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance,*' etc Or thus—'*it fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, has the advantage of conversing with its objects at the greatest distance,*' etc

"These alterations are suggested only to explain my meaning, and not to intimate that there is any fault in the sentence, as it now stands It is not



quite assimilated even his Latin lessons, and he has not dared to make the very smallest advance upon them. He does here admit an anapæst, but<sup>1</sup> he does not dream of

necessary, nay it would be wrong, to tune every period into the completest harmony. I would only signify to the reader, what that arrangement of a complicated period is, in which the harmony is most complete. We have numberless instances in Mr Addison's writings, as in the next of his papers on the imagination—"the eye has room to range abroad, to expatiate at large on the immensity of its views, and to lose itself amidst the variety of objects that offer themselves to its observation."

"The instance here given is liable to no objection. But there is danger, no doubt, lest this attention to rhythm should betray the writer, insensibly, into some degree of languor and redundancy in his expression. And it cannot be denied, that Mr Addison himself has sometimes fallen into this trap. But the *general rule* holds, nevertheless, and care is only to be taken, that in aiming at a beauty of one kind, we do not overlook another of equal, or, as in this case, of greater importance.

"What has been said may enable the reader to collect the rule in shorter sentences, or in sentences *otherwise* constructed.

"3 The rhythm of several sentences combined together into one *paragraph* is produced, in like manner, by providing that the several sentences shall differ from each other in the *number* of component parts, or in the *extent* of them, if the number be the same, or in the *run* and *construction* of the parts, where they are of the like extent. The same care must also be taken to close the *paragraph*, as the *complex sentence*, with a gracious and flowing termination. Consider the *whole first* paragraph of the paper we have now before us, and you will not find two sentences corresponding to each other in all respects. Each is varied from the rest, and the conclusion fills the ear, as well as completes the sense.

"Something like the same attention must be had in disposing the several paragraphs of the same *paper*, as in arranging the several periods of the same *paragraph*.

"But, '*verbum sapienti*.' The charm of Mr Addison's prose consists very much in the dexterous application of these rules, or rather, in consulting his *ear*, which led him instinctively to the practice from which these rules are drawn.

"If it be asked, whether the harmony of his prose be capable of improvement, I think we may say in general, that, with regard to this way of writing, in short essays to which Mr Addison's style is adapted, and for which it was formed, it is not. There is, with the utmost melody, all the *variety of composition* (which answers to what we call *pause* in good poetry) which the nature of these writings demands. In works of another length and texture, the harmony would be improved in various ways, and even by the very transgression of these rules.

"Every kind of writing has a style of its own, and a *good ear* formed on the several principles of numerous composition will easily direct how, and in what manner, to suit the rhythm to the subject and the occasion. There is no doubt that what is exquisite in one mode of writing would be finical in another. It is enough to say, that the rhythm of these essays, called *Spectators*, is wonderfully pleasing, and perhaps perfect in its kind."

<sup>1</sup> And he is hardly to be blamed for this, for much more than a century was to pass, and the enfranchisement of poetry and prose alike had to take place, before it was (quite recently) recognised.

the monosyllabic foot, which is the complement of anapaestic division. And his classical guides have not in the least suggested to him (as here they ought to have done) the necessity, or at any rate the great advantage, of the pæon. He clings to his iamb, and the result is that, flying directly in the face of those very advisers, he does not, indeed, make Addison write blank verse, but attributes (without special objection) to one of his specimens, a blank-verse arrangement which it need not in the least undergo. His "negligent redundancy" would be much better interpreted as a deliberate and very skilful amphibrach, and the whole would be best scanned as iamb, dochmiac, dochmiac, iamb, amphibrach.<sup>1</sup>

This, however, may be put aside as a question of taste. There is a great deal of uncontroversial matter in the note, for which Hurd deserves hearty commendation, and which shows acute and original sense joined to a good knowledge of the ancients. He has mastered the great principle of variety in clause, sentence, and paragraph, in composition and termination. He is perhaps, if not wrong, dangerous in specially suggesting rising amplification of members, for though this is sometimes (as has been and will be shown here) effective, it is tricky and monotonous, and very liable, as in Johnson, to pall. But on the whole he is a pioneer,<sup>2</sup> and a good pioneer, and so all honour be to him.

What is more, he not only gives us invaluable information as to the standpoint and outlook of his own day on these matters, but positively adds interest to the study of Addison's rhythm from points and manners of view quite different. We turn to the *Spectator* itself, and what do we find there? As Mr Courthope has most truly observed,<sup>3</sup> though he has not quite followed out the observation in our direction, Addison's style is "an extension of that of Dryden"—in other words, purely con-

<sup>1</sup> "Our sight | is the most perfect | and most delightful | of all | our senses |"

<sup>2</sup> See on Mason, *post*, App II

<sup>3</sup> Craik's *English Prose Selections*, III 489

versational, in rhythm, as in other things, with little harmonic device except balance, but further modernised, and, it may be, with more definite attention to niceties of cadence. Let us accumulate some well-known passages—the more well-known the better—and analyse them

Our ships are laden with the harvest of every climate, our tables are stored with spices, and oils, and wines, our rooms are filled with pyramids of china, and adorned with the workmanship of Japan, our morning's draught comes to us from the remotest corners of the earth, we repair our bodies by the drugs of America, and repose ourselves under Indian canopies. My friend Sir Andrew calls the vineyards of France, our gardens, the spice-islands, our hot beds, the Persians, our silk-weavers, and the Chinese, our potters. Nature indeed furnishes us with the bare necessities of life, but traffic gives us greater variety of what is useful, and at the same time supplies us with everything that is convenient and ornamental. Nor is it the least part of this our happiness, that whilst we enjoy the remotest products of the north and south, we are free from those extremities of weather which give them birth, that our eyes are refreshed with the green fields of Britain, at the same time that our palates are feasted with fruits that rise between the tropics.

Nature seems to have taken a particular care to disseminate her blessings among the different regions of the world, with an eye to this mutual intercourse and traffic among mankind, that the natives of the several parts of the globe might have a kind of dependence upon one another, and be united together by their common interest. Almost every degree produces something peculiar to it. The food often grows in one country, and the sauce in another. The fruits of Portugal are corrected by the products of Barbadoes, the infusion of a China plant sweetened with the pith of an Indian cane. The Philippic Islands give a flavour to our European bowls. The single dress of a woman of quality, is often the product of a hundred climates. The muff and the fan come together from the different ends of the earth. The scarf is sent from the torrid zone, and the tippet from beneath the pole. The brocade Petticoat rises out of the mines of Peru, and the diamond necklace out of the bowels of Indostan.

MR SPECTATOR—Now, Sir, the thing is this, Mr Shapely is the prettiest gentleman about town. He is very tall, but not too tall, neither. He dances like an angel. His mouth is made I do not know how, but it is the prettiest that I ever saw in my life. He is always laughing, for he has an infinite deal of wit. If you did but see how he rolls his stockings! He has a thousand pretty fancies, and I am sure, if you saw him, you would like him. He is a very good scholar, and can talk Latin as fast as English. I

wish you could but see him dance! Now, you must understand, poor Mr Shapely has no estate, but how can he help that, you know? and yet my friends are so unreasonable as to be always teasing me about him because he has no estate, but I am sure he has that that is better than an estate, for he is a good-natured, ingenious, modest, tall, well-bred, handsome man, and I am obliged to him for his civilities ever since I saw him. I forgot to tell you that he has black eyes, and looks upon me now and then as if he had tears in them. And yet my friends are so unreasonable that they would have me be uncivil to him. I have a good portion which they cannot hinder me of, and shall be fourteen on the 29th day of August next, and am therefore willing to settle in the world, as soon as I can, and so is Mr Shapely. But everybody I advise with here is poor Mr Shapely's enemy. I desire, therefore, you will give me your advice, for I know you are a wise man, and if you advise me well I am resolved to follow it. I heartily wish you could see him dance, and am, Sir, Your most obedient servant, B D

He loves your *Spectators* mightily

He then led me to the highest pinnacle of the rock, and placing me on the top of it, cast thy eyes eastward, said he, and tell me what thou seest. I see, said I, a huge valley, and a prodigious tide of water rolling through it. The valley that thou seest, said he, is the vale of misery, and the tide of water that thou seest is part of the great tide of eternity. What is the reason, said I, that the tide I see rises out of a thick mist at one end, and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other? What thou seest, said he, is that portion of eternity which is called time, measured out by the sun, and reaching from the beginning of the world to its consummation. Examine now, said he, this sea that is bounded with darkness at both ends, and tell me what thou discoverest in it. I see a bridge, said I, standing in the midst of the tide. The bridge thou seest, said he, is human life, consider it attentively. Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of threescore and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which, added to those that were entire, made up the number about an hundred. As I was counting the arches, the genius told me that this bridge consisted at first of a thousand arches, but that a great flood swept away the rest, and left the bridge in the ruinous condition I now beheld it. but tell me further, said he, what thou discoverest on it. I see multitudes of people passing over it, said I, and a black cloud hanging on each end of it. As I looked more attentively, I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge, into the great tide that flowed under neath it, and upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trap doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon, but they fell through them into the tide and immediately disappeared. These hidden pit falls were set very thick at the entrance of the bridge, so that the throngs of

people no sooner broke through the cloud, but many of them fell into them. They drew thinner towards the middle, but multiplied and lay closer together towards the end of the arches that were entire

When I look | upon the tombs | of the great, | every | emotion | of envy | dies in me | when I read | the epitaphs | of the beautiful, | every | inordinate | desire | goes out | when I meet | with the grief | of parents | upon a tombstone, | my heart | melts | with compassion | when I see | the tombs | of the parents | themselves, | I consider | the vanity | of grieving | for those | whom we must quickly | follow | when I see | kings | lying | by those | who deposed them, | when I consider | rival | wits | placed | side by side, | or the holy men | that divided | the world | with their contests | and disputes, | I reflect | with sorrow | and astonishment | on the little | competitions, | factions, | and debates | of mankind

[These passages differ from each other almost as much in what we may call atmosphere of subject as in subject itself, yet the atmosphere of rhythmical treatment is surprisingly uniform. The ease, the fluency, the *conviviality* is everywhere, but perhaps there is everywhere also that almost obstinately "middle" quality upon which Johnson insisted. Nothing ever jars, and in such a passage, for instance, as the delightful malice of poor "B. D.'s" letter (which has no parallel anywhere except in Miss Austen) there is nothing wanting. In fact, here the conversational, almost or altogether, becomes the dramatic, and you hear "B. D." sighing in a really pathetic fashion, "I wish you could see him dance," and still more pathetically faltering as she tells of tears in Mr Shapely's black eyes. But this is suggested delivery rather than pure rhythm of reading. So again in the beautiful and famous "Westminster Abbey" passage, it is only the thought that is very eloquent the accompaniment is little more than a usually careful and prolonged example of balance, and of that extension of clause, like a flight of steps expanding upwards or downwards, which has been so often noted. In fact, it may be questioned whether the actual conclusion "on the mankind" is very happy in its rhythmical composition. But the piece is, in that respect, the most ambitious of the four, and so I have at least divided it

On the other hand, in the vivid and almost Macaulayish reflections on the Exchange, and even in the most serious and ambitious part of the "Vision of Mirza," we cannot but feel, good as both are, what a falling off there is from Sir Thomas Browne, who, be it remembered, did not die till Addison was already a schoolboy. Think how Sir Thomas would have lengthened out the sharp staccato phrases, about Timbuctoo, Barbadoes, and the Philippines, with erudite or metaphysical conceits couched in long-drawn symphonies! how the "Vision" would have decked itself with all the colours, and bidden its arches play with all the fugues and toccatas, of *Urn Burial* and the *Garden of Cyrus*! Far be it from me, now or at any time, to commit the unscholarly and Philistine error and ineptitude of finding fault with a thing because it is not something else. If I contrast the meditations of Addison—perhaps more appropriate to the stately tombs or cenotaphs of the basilica on Ludgate Hill than to those of the older fane on the Isle of Thorney—with the remarks of Browne on the rude urns brought to light in a Norfolk field, it is not to scout the one and flatter the other, but simply to emphasise the difference between them, and to point out the limitations of the later style. It neither aims at, nor does it admit of, the gorgeousness of its predecessor, mainly, or at least partly, because it does not aim at or admit of that predecessor's variety of rhythm.)

In the respect with which alone we have to do, Steele is merely a more careless Addison, and Arbuthnot, in this as in others, is almost inseparable from Swift. Atterbury is slightly older-fashioned than the others, and nearer the Dryden group. But three of the greater Queen Anne men, Berkeley, Shaftesbury, and Bolingbroke, must be noticed in some little detail, and these three differ from each other in the most curious fashion.

Berkeley, I confess, appears to me to have been almost the greatest *writer*, from our own and the nearest adjacent points of view, whom the new style *post* 1660 had yet produced—greater than Addison, if not so variously agreeable, and though not so great as Dryden, possessing

the advantage that, as he only used one harmony (for his few verses are negligible in form) he was able to pour his whole strength into it

He is not, of course, *flamboyant*, his time would not let him be, but read this

Natural | phenomena | are only | natural | appearances | They  
are, | therefore, | such | as we see | and perceive them | Their real |  
and objective | natures | are, | therefore, | the same, | passive |  
without anything | active, | fluent | and changing | without any-  
thing | permanent | in them | However, | as these | make the first |  
impressions, | and the mind | takes her first | flight | and spring, |  
as it were, | by resting | her foot | on these objects, | they are not  
only | first | considered | by all men, | but most | considered | by  
most men | They | and the phantoms | that result | from those |  
appearances, | the children of | imagination | grafted | upon sense, |  
such | for example | as pure space, | are thought | by many | the  
very first | in existence | and stability, | and to embrace | and com-  
prehend | all other | beings |

A very careless reader may say, "Good enough in the plain-style way, but what is there in it to justify the encomium just passed?" I had at first neither divided nor scanned anything in the passage itself, and though I have changed my mind, it cannot be difficult for any one to disregard the symbols and observe for himself how much above the "stop" system of clauses in the same sentence is the sentence-division and arrangement in the first three full-stop spaces here. See, reading it carefully, how much spring and swell of cadence there is everywhere, and especially note that remarkable inset "the children of imagination | grafted | upon sense |" with the change and idiosyncrasy of its harmony suiting the almost poetic figure expressed in it

Berkeley can apply this silver-gilt, if not actually golden, style, not merely to the austerities of philosophy

and theology, but, as in *Alciphron* and the *Sirrs*, to much more miscellaneous subjects. I had the good luck to stumble upon the two last-named books when I was quite a boy, and I think they first gave me the idea of beautiful prose as such. But the abstruser treatises<sup>1</sup> are not less distinguished by it. I think they are even more so. There is hardly any writer (I may be allowed to repeat the exceptions of Plato and Malebranche, while I should not feel disinclined now to add Schopenhauer and Nietzsche) who shows better how perfectly idle is the notion (entertained by some ancients, and a great many moderns to the present day, and formulated apologetically by Hurd in the passage quoted above) that attention to rhythm will betray the writer into "languor and redundancy of expression," or, one may add, that attention to it on the part of the reader means indifference to the meaning, or failure to appreciate it. And Berkeley, while he can be almost as mellifluous as Hooker with greater variety, can be as pungent as Swift, adapting his rhythm to pungency in a way which Swift hardly cared to use, as here—

All these | advantages | are produced | from drunkenness | in the  
vulgar way | by strong beer, |

where the molossus or, if still greater emphasis is wanted, the trebly repeated monosyllabic foot at the end, clenches the defiance<sup>2</sup> of the precedent groups of lighter syllables in the most charming way.

That there should be strong differences of opinion as to Shaftesbury as a thinker is not surprising, nor, perhaps, is surprise exactly the word for the way in which one discovers similar differences about his style. Mr E. K. Chambers<sup>3</sup> thinks it "consummately easy and lucid," holds (this itself is rather surprising considering dates) that he "*brings* into English prose an order and clearness of which it was *beginning* to stand in need,"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The above is from *The Principles of Human Knowledge*.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase, it may be just desirable to say, is from the grave burlesque of the "private vices-public benefits" argument in *Alciphron*.

<sup>3</sup> In the section on Shaftesbury in Sir Henry Craik's book, in 448.

<sup>4</sup> The italics are mine. Shaftesbury is not known to have written (or,



but admits that he is "terribly affected" Lamb, we all know, thought him "genteel" But the author of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, one of the very best critics of style in the eighteenth century, and very far indeed from being negligible to-day, made out his lordship, in a most vigorous and unsparing examination,<sup>1</sup> to be, "though far from deficient in acuteness, invention, or vivacity," "perhaps the most eminent of all that have written in the English language" for "*galimatias*," "bombast," and "the sublime of nonsense"

One is bound to say that the examples which Campbell produces prove his own point to the hilt, and show, from ours, that Shaftesbury could at any rate be guilty of the clumsiest lumps of inharmonious composition

If the savour of things lies cross to honesty, if the fancy be florid and the appetite high towards the subaltern beauties and lower order of worldly symmetries and proportions, the conduct will infallibly turn this latter way — *Characteristics*, III 11 2

But what can one do? or how dispense with these darker disquisitions or moonlight voyages, when we have to deal with a sort of moon-blind wits who, though very acute and able in their kind, may be said to renounce daylight, and extinguish in a manner the bright visible outward world, by allowing us to know nothing beside what we can prove by strict and formal demonstration — *Ibid* III 14 2

The last sentence, particularly, is as formless a heap as can be found in mid-seventeenth century, without any of the rhythmical beauty of parts which so often redeems the prose of that time

Of course Shaftesbury is not always as bad as this, but it must be confessed that he is seldom successful in turning out a harmonious sentence, as may be seen from the very first paragraph of his which Mr Chambers himself has extracted

Thus, my Lord, there are many panics in mankind, besides merely that of fear *And thus is religion also panic, when*

---

at least published) anything before 1708, and had been born in 1671 Dryden and the minor apostles of "order and clearness" had been born, and had written, forty years before him

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Book II, chap VI, part II To be found at 247 of Tegg's edition (London, 1850)

*enthusiasm of any kind gets up, as oft, on melancholy occasions it will, for vapours naturally rise, and in bad times especially, when the spirits of men are low, as either in public calamities, or during the unwholesomeness of air or diet, or when convulsions happen in nature, storms, earthquakes, or other amazing prodigies at this season the panic must needs run high, and the magistrate of necessity give way to it* For, to apply a serious remedy, and bring the sword, or *fascēs*, as a cure, must make the case more melancholy, and increase the very cause of the distemper To forbid men's natural fears, and to endeavour the overpowering them by other fears, must needs be a most unnatural method The magistrate, if he be any artist, should have a gentler hand, and instead of caustics, incisions, and amputations, should be using the softest balms, and, with a kind sympathy, entering into the concern of the people, and taking, as it were, their passion upon him, should, when he has soothed and satisfied it, endeavour, by cheerful ways, to divert and heal it

It can only be by accident if a writer of such a sentence as that italicised here achieves anywhere even a sentence, much more a paragraph, of any rhythmical beauty, and I think we need not further ransack the *Characteristics* in search of one The fact is that Shaftesbury, despite his genteelity, really belongs as a writer to the disorderly house, against which Swift, Addison, and their followers were contemporaneously protesting His well-known dislike of Dryden may be, as some have said, excused on the score of filial piety, but his own composition is generally "an unfeathered thing" (if not even an "*unfooted*") and not unfrequently "a shapeless lump"

There has, of course, been much more controversy about the other "sophist of quality" (as his contemporaries might have called, and perhaps did call him)—about Bolingbroke But whether he was a "brilliant knave" or "a much misunderstood politician", a traitor or a patriot, an atheist in subterfuge or merely a rationalist in not the worst sense of the term, there can, I think, be little dispute between competent persons on the proposition that he was an uncommonly good writer Hardly any one of the group of which we are now speaking, except Berkeley, seems to me to have excelled him in faultlessness of form, for Addison, much more

agreeable, and, at his best, superior in most other ways, is also much more unequal in this respect. If few people "now read Bolingbroke" except to write books on him, it is chiefly because his subjects have lost interest, perhaps also (I should hardly deny it) because the charges of hollowness, and of a certain monotony in excellence, are true. Except Halifax, he is our first known example of the fact that a very great orator practically must be a good writer<sup>1</sup>. But he is also an example, as (I should say, though some would not) Cicero himself is, that a very good orator may be a rather tiresome writer<sup>2</sup>. Bolingbroke's ineluctable adequacy does become something wearisome, but it exists. You never "catch him out". From the *Letter to Windham* (which is, I suppose, his diploma piece), through his "occasional" writings, his *Dissertations*, and his *Letters* and his *Essays*, through the *Patriot King* and the Pope and Pouilly epistles, and the *Historical Remarks*, down to those "Fragments or Minutes" as to which he does admit correction, but which, if they were not castigated with all the author's skill and pains, are the most remarkable "jottings" ever written—you never catch him out. My friend Sir Henry Craik has called him a "journalist", and I followed that way of life myself too long to think the appellation necessarily a reproach. But if so, he was one of the first of journalists in more than one sense of the ordinal.

And a certain kind of rhythm was one of the chief weapons which made him so formidable and so resourceful in his own kind of journalism. Read this passage, taken almost at haphazard from the Windham letter.

His religion is not founded on the love of virtue and the detestation of vice, on a sense of that obedience which is due to the

---

<sup>1</sup> The chief exception usually made is Mr Gladstone—Of this oratorical style another example is "Junius". His exaggeration of it brought him most of his undeserved praise, and it has doubtless been a main cause of his well deserved oblivion.

<sup>2</sup> I do not blush to confess that my own copy of his complete *Works* (8 vols, London, 1809) is largely uncut. I had read him before I bought it, and I have only cared to read him again in parts.

will of the Supreme Being,<sup>1</sup> and a sense of the obligations which creatures formed to live in a mutual dependence on one another lie under. The spring of his whole conduct is fear—fear of the horns of the Devil and of the flames of Hell. He has been taught to believe that nothing but a blind submission to the Church of Rome, and a strict adherence to all the terms of that communion, can save him from these dangers. He has all the superstition of a Capuchin, but I found on him no tincture of the religion of a prince. Do not imagine that I loose the reins of my imagination, or that I write what my resentments dictate. I tell you simply my opinion. I have heard the same description of his character made by those who know him best, and I conversed with very few among the Roman Catholics themselves who did not think him too much a Papist.

Now I certainly am not bribed by any agreement with the *animus* of this character of “James III,” inasmuch as I am a Tory of Tories now, and should have been a Jacobite of Jacobites then. But how *artistement complet* it is in its combination of the finish and fineness of the rapier with the smashing effect of the bludgeon! the mixture of short and long sentences, the scaffolding<sup>2</sup> of the longer ones, the unerring, yet unmechanical, use of balance, cumulation, parallelism! The little sentence coming after a long one—“The spring of | his whole conduct | is fear |”—amphibrach, antispast or third pæon, and iamb, with the emphasised and contemptuous “*fear*” making almost another amphibrach (is fēe-ār)—is like the advance and retreat, to gain momentum and final impetus, of a battering-ram. And the whole run of the various sentences shows equal mastery. It is unnecessary to multiply instances, but this has only the advantage over hundreds that might be given—of that personal animus, fair or unfair, which gives so much life to speech and style.

It is, of course, improbable that many—if indeed it be possible that any—careful readers should miss the oratorical tone which, even in this comparatively familiar

<sup>1</sup> “*Que tu m’emblées avec ton Être suprême !*” And, indeed, he was almost the father of all such as use that abstraction or evasion.

<sup>2</sup> I had used the word without thinking of its double meaning, but the passage is almost a spiritual guillotine for the poor Chevalier.

passage, Bolingbroke suggests, and which, in his more rhetorical writings, is still more prominent I shall endeavour, in the Interchapter, to show more minutely what rhythmical characteristics this oratorical tone carries with it, but it will hardly be contested that in various forms, from the conversational to the conciliatory, whether the latter be of the *concio ad vulgus* or of the *concio ad clerum*, it pervades the whole century from Addison to Mackintosh This necessarily impresses a considerable sameness upon the results, and dispenses the historian from giving very numerous examples of them There are indeed whole classes of authors, distinguished, and even highly distinguished, in other ways, who, for reasons which may be shortly presented, hardly come in here at all The most important of these are the letter-writers and the novelists

It is evident that the epistoler steps out of his proper course, and is deliberately aiming at publication, if he puts into his letters anything but the movement of unaffected conversation Gray may do it, because he has a certain ineradicable artificiality,<sup>1</sup> just as, long afterwards, Shelley may, because his soul is a harmony and its utterances cannot but be harmonious Lady Mary has a good deal of the formal, balanced, semi-oratorical cadence of the time, but this chiefly appears in her earliest letters, where the Master of Peterhouse is doubtless right in setting it down to "juvenile affectation," or in her very latest, which have been sometimes suspected of "literary" contamination Chesterfield and Horace Walpole, though the intention of the first was certainly didactic, and the mood of the second was never quite free from pose, no more aim at "fine writing" in our sense than does Cowper

On the other hand, the novelist, in parts of his work at any rate, is perfectly at liberty to indulge in the most elaborate prose, and we shall or should be able to draw striking examples of it from the great novelists of the

<sup>1</sup> I use the word in no bad sense, and any one, if he likes, may substitute "classicality" or whatever complimentary synonym pleases him

mid-nineteenth century. But their forerunners at this time had quite enough to do to use the new familiar style which had been provided for them by Dryden, Addison, and Swift, to think of *floriture* or flamboyance. Fielding, indeed, in the ironical and other *parabases* which diversify his work, writes somewhat ambitiously, but hardly attempts any rhythmical device save a generally oratorical balance. Richardson is too clumsy, Smollett, where he affects ceremony, is as the other formal scribes of his time, and Sterne's deliberate and constant use of mechanical means, to enforce such emphasis as he aims at, puts him practically out of court with us. Goldsmith's much and justly praised quality of style depends in no respect upon elaborate rhythmical cadence.

It will therefore probably be best to content ourselves with taking Conyers Middleton as an example of the earlier Augustan or post-Augustan style, handled *not* as Berkeley handled it, glancing next at Hume and Robertson and "Junius," and taking something more than a glance at Adam Smith, dealing more thoroughly with the three great agents in raising this style—Johnson, Burke, and Gibbon,—and finally exemplifying the "standard Georgian" style of the latest eighteenth and the earlier nineteenth century.

We have, of course, nothing to do with the question of Conyers Middleton's honesty or orthodoxy—indeed it has become so common for Canons, Professors, Deans (if not also Bishops) to take, as De Quincey, when it was not so common, said, "large quarterly cheques from an institution of which they have become enemies," that, on the method of compurgation, he would probably be acquitted. Nor have we much, though a little, more to do with his general style. That Parr, who attacked his plagiarisms so fiercely, should have put him next to Addison as a writer, goes for very little. Parr's claims as a literary critic, at least in English, are non-existent, and, being quite as acrid and quite as unscrupulous, a controversialist as Middleton himself, he doubtless knew the value of throwing up a general attack by a particular acknowledgment. On the other hand, De Quincey,

Middleton's chief later assailant, had both general and particular prejudices against his form as well as his matter

For myself, though I am quite "on the other side of the way" to him in matters theological, I am by no means sure that Middleton was a scoundrel, and though I could not put him in the same class (even if he were at the bottom and the other at the top) with Addison, I do not think he was a bad writer. But from our special point of view he certainly shows the dangers of Augustan "plainness," and explains those various efforts to raise it to which we shall soon come

Here are two passages from Middleton which show him, the first I think as nearly as possible at his best from our point of view, the second, if not at his worst (for it would hardly be fair to sift out such a thing), very decidedly *not* at his best, but (as I can say from a sufficient study of his whole works) by no means much, if at all, below his average

This is commonly called the first triumvirate, which was nothing else, in reality, but a traitorous conspiracy of three the most powerful citizens of Rome, | to extort | from their country, | by violence, | what they could not | obtain | by law | Pompey's chief motive was to get his acts confirmed by Cæsar in his consulship, Cæsar's, by giving way to Pompey's glory, to advance his own, and Crassus's, to gain that ascendant, which he could not sustain alone, by the authority of Pompey and the vigour of Cæsar. But Cæsar, who formed the scheme, easily saw that the chief advantage of it would necessarily redound to himself. he knew that the old enmity between the other two, though it might be palliated, could never be healed without leaving a secret jealousy between them, and as, by their common help, he was sure to make himself superior to all others, so, by managing the one against the other, he hoped to gain, at last, a superiority also over them both. To cement this union therefore the more strongly, by the ties of blood as well as interest, he gave his daughter Julia, a beautiful and accomplished young lady, in marriage to Pompey, and, from this era, all the Roman writers date the origin of the civil wars which afterwards ensued, and the subversion of the Republic, in which they ended

If the religion of a country was to be considered only as an imposture, an engine of government to keep the people in order,

even then an endeavour to unhinge it, unless with a design to substitute a better in its stead, would in my opinion be highly unreasonable. But should the priests of such a religion, for the sake of their authority and power, labour to impose their own failures for divine truths, to possess the people with an enthusiastic zeal for them, manageable only by themselves and to be played even against the government, as oft as it served their separate interests, in such a case, 'tis the duty of every man who loves his country and his fellow-creatures, to oppose all such attempts, to confine religion to its proper bounds, to the use for which it was instituted, of inspiring benevolence, modesty, submission into the people, nor suffer the credit of it to grow too strong for that of the State, the authority of the priest, for that of the magistrate.

Here there is no positive fault to find with No 1, on the contrary, it gives us a pretty good notion what made people admire Middleton. It is a very fair example of the clear, business-like style, it is even not inharmonious in the balanced mode<sup>1</sup>. But it does little if anything more than escape *in*harmony. harmony in any distinct and delightful sense it cannot be said to possess. No 2, on the other hand, begins in much the same way, but, in the second sentence, goes from not bad to very decided badness and inharmoniousness. It is too long, the members of it are badly adjusted, the combination of "manageable," which itself would be manageable enough in Latin, gives a jolt in sense and a jar in sound to the English, and the subsequent clauses are ill-jointed, ill-interproportioned, and productive, as a whole, of no rhythmical effect.

At such an effect, indeed, it is pretty certain that Middleton did not aim, or dream of aiming, and it would be absurd to subject his productions to any process of rhythmical analysis. If he has not actually attained the "flatness and meanness" of the Photian warning, he has gone very near it, except in such a piece as the *Letter to Venn*, where interested controversy excites him up to, but not beyond, a tone of dignity.

This, not exactly cacorhythmic but, arrhythmic character affects almost all the prose of the first half of the eighteenth century, except where, as we have seen in

<sup>1</sup> See the scanned portion



Bolingbroke, the oratorical cadence manifests itself eminently, or where, as in the last-mentioned work of Middleton, the thrust and parry of controversy and personal feeling infuses a rhythm of its own. It is visible in the very remarkable *learnt* English of Hume and Robertson, in the pinchbeck of "Junius," in such vigorous and really idiomatic stuff as the writing of William Law, in the sinewy but graceless, if not exactly ungraceful, logic of Butler.

But the inevitable law of ups-and-downs, which nowhere works more regularly than here, decreed the rise of dissatisfaction with this drabness of colour and monotony of sound. It was too early to go back to gorgeous phraseology and intricate symphonic effects. But the unfailing engine of balance, which all the writers mentioned applied more or less freely, and all others, but the lowest, to some extent, could be set to work more and more elaborately, and it was. A third writer of the Scotch school (let it be remembered that we have not merely probability but positive evidence to establish the fact of their deliberately writing English as a half-foreign language), Adam Smith, exhibits the tendency, combined with that of step-arrangement, almost before he could have learnt anything from his enemy, Johnson, as here, where I have taken the liberty to carve the paragraph into its constituent rhythmical members.

The violator of the more sacred laws of justice can never reflect on the sentiments which mankind must entertain with regard to him, without feeling all the agonies of shame and horror and consternation. When his passion is gratified, and he begins coolly to reflect on his past conduct, he can enter into none of the motives which influenced it. They appear now as detestable to him as they did always to other people. By sympathising with the hatred and abhorrence which other men must entertain for him, he becomes in some measure the object of his own hatred and abhorrence. The situation of the person, who suffered by his injustice, now calls upon his pity. He is grieved at the thought of it, regrets the unhappy effects of his own conduct, and feels at the same time that they have rendered him the proper object of the resentment and indignation of mankind, and of what is the natural consequence of resentment, vengeance and punishment. The thought of this perpetually haunts him, and fills him with terror and amazement. He dares no longer look society in the face, but imagines himself, as it were, rejected,

and thrown out from the affections of all mankind He cannot hope for the consolation of sympathy in this his greatest and most dreadful distress The remembrance of his crimes has shut out all fellow feeling with him from the hearts of his fellow creatures The sentiments which they entertain with regard to him are the very thing which he is most afraid of Everything seems hostile, and he would be glad to fly to some inhospitable desert, where he might never more behold the face of a human creature, nor read in the countenance of mankind the condemnation of his crimes *But solitude is still more dreadful than society* His own thoughts can present him with nothing but what is black, unfortunate, and disastrous, the melancholy foreboding of incomprehensible misery and ruin *The horror of solitude drives him back into society*, and he comes again into the presence of mankind, astonished to appear before them, loaded with shame and distracted with fear, in order to supplicate some little protection from the countenance of those very judges who he knows have already all unanimously condemned him Such is the nature of that sentiment which is properly called remorse, of all the sentiments which can enter the human breast the most dreadful It is made up of shame from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct, of grief for the effects of it, of pity for those who suffer by it, and of the dread and terror of punishment from the consciousness of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures

The violator of the more sacred laws of justice can never reflect on the sentiments which mankind must entertain with regard to him, without feeling all the agonies of shame and horror and consternation  
 When his passion is gratified,  
 and he begins coolly to reflect on his past conduct,  
 he can enter into none of the motives which influenced it  
 They appear now as detestable to him  
 as they did always to other people  
 By sympathising with the hatred and abhorrence  
 which other men must entertain for him,  
 he becomes in some measure the object  
 of his own hatred and abhorrence  
 The situation of the person,  
 who suffered by his injustice,  
 now calls upon his pity  
 He is grieved at the thought of it,  
 regrets the unhappy effects of his own conduct,  
 and feels at the same time that they have rendered him the proper  
 object of the resentment and indignation of mankind, and of  
 what is the natural consequence of resentment, vengeance and  
 punishment  
 The thought of this perpetually haunts him,  
 and fills him with terror and amazement  
 He dares no longer look society in the face,

but imagines himself, as it were, rejected, and thrown out from the  
affections of all mankind

He cannot hope for the consolation of sympathy

in this his greatest and most dreadful distress

The remembrance of his crimes has shut out

all fellow-feeling with him from the hearts of his fellow-creatures

The sentiments which they entertain with regard to him

are the very thing which he is most afraid of

Everything seems hostile,

and he would be glad to fly to some inhospitable desert,

where he might never more behold the face of a human creature,

nor read in the countenance of mankind the condemnation of his  
crimes

*But solitude is still more dreadful than society*

His own thoughts can present him with nothing

but what is black, unfortunate, and disastrous,

the melancholy foreboding of incomprehensible misery and ruin

*The horror of solitude drives him back into society,*

and he comes again into the presence of mankind,

astonished to appear before them,

loaded with shame

and distracted with fear,

in order to supplicate some little protection from the countenance of

those very judges who he knows have already all unanimously

condemned him

Such is the nature of that sentiment,

which is properly called remorse, of all the sentiments which can

enter the human breast

the most dreadful It is made up

of shame from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct,

of grief for the effects of it,

of pity for those who suffer by it,

and of the dread and terror of punishment from the consciousness of

the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures

This<sup>1</sup> is comparatively simple in its swing backwards  
and forwards, and its architecture of extended clauses,  
while the two italicised phrases especially show the  
novice Johnson would almost certainly have made the  
second run "The horror of solitude drives him back into  
*the shelter of society,*" or something of that sort But  
more of that when we come to the Great Cham himself

Before doing so, it may be well to call a halt for some

<sup>1</sup> Of course, a similar process may be applied not merely to Hooker or  
Bacon, but even to Taylor or Browne, but to nothing like the same extent, and  
with a vast deal left unaccounted for, and corresponding to nothing here It  
is *folding* against *fluency*

general observations, which may be expanded in the Interchapter, but cannot be wholly pretermitted here. It may already have suggested itself to an observant reader that, independently of a tendency to impoverish rhythm, or rather in pretty close dependence on such impoverishment, a remarkable difference in *kind* of rhythmical arrangement manifests itself. Foot-scansion is still applicable—in fact, as should have been sufficiently shown by this time, it is as impossible for prose as for poetry to get out of it. But at the very moment when the quality of the individual foot was assuming a tyrannous importance of uniformity in verse, it was almost disappearing in prose. Except at the end of clauses and sentences (to which point accordingly Hurd (*v sup*), all unknowing of the general law, but observing it, devoted his chief attention), the constitution of the feet produces very little effect, and for the most part is only technically noticeable<sup>1</sup>. The balance of blocks of feet, which corresponds in prose to the variety and symphonic interweaving of lines in verse, only requires consideration of the blocks themselves, and indeed might be rather endangered by anything else. The architecture, to change the analogy, is not exactly “Cyclopean,” because the blocks of which it consists are in some cases fair and square ashlar, but they are of great size, and the ornament consists almost solely in their overlapping and arrangement, not in any carving or arcading.

It was therefore in the direction of minuter and more complicated attention to details of arrangement that attempts at improvement were likely to be first made, and this—in accordance with the general tendency of the century till nearly its close, when the reaction in all ways was all the more violent—took place, not by way of revolt against the general arrangement, but by way of supplement and embellishment of these details.

Into the more general controversies about Johnson's style there is little need for us to enter. It was, of course,

<sup>1</sup> To which it may be added that the “*extended feet*,” or groups of six or even more syllables, suggest themselves more than ever

extravagantly caricatured and unjustly depreciated by the earlier Romantics, and scanty justice was done to it even by a person so very unlike a Romantic as Macaulay. On the other hand, some recent authorities of great competence have reverted to even more than the admiration of contemporaries, and my friend Sir Henry Craik thinks that the great doctor "set a standard of prose style that might establish its own laws beyond all gainsaying"—that, if I do not misunderstand him, Johnson set "a model for all time." One may dissent as strongly as possible from the first set of views without quite going to the furthest length of the second. I should myself say that if any one man ever set a model for all time in English prose it was Dryden, that while Swift in one way and Addison in another had lengthened and varied the Drydenian model, their contemporaries and successors had mainly derogated from it, and that it was Johnson's work to restore it, with fresh and striking, if not always quite *palmary*, variations, and in a manner which could be easily followed. But our business is to show, with especial reference to rhythm, what that manner was.

Whatever the much-talked-of influence of Browne upon Johnson may have been, it certainly was small here. A characteristic sentence of Johnson and a characteristic sentence of Sir Thomas could only be compared, as regards rhythm, by an ear so dull as to be *ab initio* disqualified. Every now and then the virility of Johnson's natural genius will produce something quite out of his ordinary mannerism, and of all time or of no time at all. But I think it not rash to say that it never takes either Browne's special flow, or any of the special seventeenth-century cadences. The general principles of Johnson's sentence-and-clause architecture, and consequently of his sentence-and-clause rhythmical effect, are simply those which we have traced from Dryden before him to Smith alongside of him—parallelism, balance, and occasionally what we have called "step" construction—the lengthening and shortening of *kola* in systematic arrangement, like the sky-line of a certain kind of gable or the section-profile

of the *perron* of a house His main peculiarity—this statement has been demurred to by his extreme admirers as grudging, but I think it can be proved to the hilt—is parallelism pushed to an extreme, and sometimes beyond all doubt an exaggerated, degree To exhibit the inwardness of Johnson's handling, as in the two following passages, one really wants, as in some other cases, coloured inks

The task of an author is, *either to teach what is not known, or to recommend known truths by his manner of adorning them, either to let new light in upon the mind, and open new scenes to the prospect, or to vary the dress and situation of common objects, so as to give them fresh grace and more powerful attractions, to spread such flowers over the regions through which the intellect has already made its progress, as may tempt it to return, and take a second view of things hastily passed over, or negligently regarded*

Either of these labours is very difficult, because that they may not be fruitless, men must not only be *persuaded of their errors, but reconciled to their guide*, they must not only *confess their ignorance*, but, what is still less pleasing, *must allow that he from whom they are to learn is more knowing than themselves*

It might be imagined that *such an employment was in itself sufficiently irksome and hazardous, that none would be found so malevolent as wantonly to add weight to the stone of Sisyphus, and that few endeavours would be used to obstruct those advances to reputation, which must be made at such an expense of time and thought, with so great hazard in the miscarriage, and with so little advantage from the success*

Yet there is a certain race of men, that *either imagine it their duty, or make it their amusement, to hinder the reception of every work of learning or genius, who stand as sentinels in the avenues of fame, and value themselves upon giving ignorance and envy the first notice of a prey*

Even the acquisition of knowledge is often much facilitated by the advantages of society he that never compares his notions with those of others, readily acquiesces in his first thoughts, and very seldom discovers the objections which may be raised against his opinions, he, therefore, often thinks himself in possession of truth, when he is only fondling an error long since exploded He that has neither companions nor rivals in his studies, will always applaud his own progress and think highly of his performances, because he knows not that others have equalled or excelled him And I am afraid it may be added, that the student who withdraws himself from the world will soon feel that ardour extinguished which pride or emulation had enkindled, and take the advantage of secrecy to sleep, rather than to labour

Now this mosaic arrangement, necessarily and of itself, creates rhythm, and this rhythm is as necessarily harmonious to a certain extent. Both the resemblances and the differences produce this necessity, and their multiplicity and intricacy increase the quality of the rhythm itself. But any one who examines Johnson's composition with sufficient care will discover that—whether deliberately and consciously or not, as has been said so often, does not in the least matter—he adds immensely, and as none of his forerunners, save perhaps Addison and certainly Berkeley, had done, while these had done it to a much less extent, by varying or repeating, coupling or contrasting, the rhythmical and musical value of the clauses, word-groups, and words paralleled with each other. Compare “hastily | passed over” with “negligently | regarded”, value together “the acquisition | of knowledge” | with “the advantages | of society”, juxtapose deftly “errors” and “guide”, consider the more complicated criss-cross of “hazard | in the miscarriage” | and “advantage | from the success”

The result of such study—which may be considerably amplified even from these extracts, but which may, of course, be much better supplemented by wider reading of Johnson—must surely be clear already. Not merely does Johnson probably aim at, and certainly secure, much more rhythmical character than had been seen for nearly a century, but he secures it, to a large extent, by recurrence to the manipulation of the individual foot, as well as of the clause or block. This was a great recovery, and it merited the admiration which it received. I may even go so far, in the direction of Sir Henry Craik's encomium, as to say that Johnson did lay down more imitable examples, and so indirectly canons, of the *Augustan* style than any one had ever done before.

Nothing could be easier—and nothing could be more insufficient—than to divide up these passages as we did

in the case of Smith The divisions are there—so patent to the ear, if not even to the eye, that almost any man could mark them off as fast as he reads the passage But they are very much more intricate, and they have not merely general and external, but particular and multiplied internal, correspondences or contrasts of the most curious kind

Thus we have, in the first place and paragraph, the obvious parallelism of the clauses introduced by the repeated "ethers" and "ors" In the second place, but in this same paragraph, we have the telescoping out of these clauses, so that the first "either" clause has six words exclusive of the "either," and the first "or" clause ten, while the second "either" has sixteen and the second "or" no less than fifty-eight<sup>1</sup> But this is nothing like all In the third place, we find parallelism within parallelism "Teach" corresponds to "recommend", "what is not known" to "known truths by his manner of adorning them" "Let in new light upon the mind" sets to "open new scenes to the prospect" in a single main clause itself Nor does the "laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere" of the arrangement cease yet "Light" balances itself with "scene," "mind" with "prospect," within this very counterpoise And so it goes on throughout the parallelism of clause, not seldom expanding into triplets, as in the italicised close of the third paragraph

But "example" and "imitable," as we wrote above, are two words which inevitably arouse remembrance of the other word that comes between them in the tag Are we here also to supply *virtus*?

As a matter of fact, "Yes", as a matter of necessity, "No" The drawbacks in the mould—its stiffness, its monotony, its indifference to the matter put into it—are unmistakable and undeniable From such immediate followers as Hawkesworth to the almost inimitable

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested to me that the comparison would be strengthened by giving the number of *syllables* in each clause It is six, fifteen, eighteen, eighty three



caricatures provided by Sydney Smith on Mackintosh,<sup>1</sup> by that respectable defender of the French Revolution himself, almost beyond caricature, and by Miss Ferrier in a short and charming passage,<sup>2</sup> the fact is proved beyond all contradiction. But clearly this is no fault of Johnson's. *He* did not write nonsense, either unintentionally or in caricature. Whether it is not the fault of the style is a subtler question, and perhaps it can only be answered by a sort of admission that all hard-and-fast quasi-mechanical forms of style are open to this drawback. The bottle cannot help its contents, and the stronger and more rigid its form is the more patient it is of bad wine. The scaffolding or skeleton cannot help what you choose to accumulate upon it or by its means.

But take the other side, and the justice, up to a certain point, of Sir Henry Craik's view is attested from our own position. Up to this time there had been hardly anything to guide the rash neophyte in English prose. The triplets and initial inversions of Fisher and his school, the rudimentary balance of Ascham in one way and Lyly in another, were rudimentary merely. The swallow-sweeps of Hooker, and much more the half-amorphous magnificence of the great seventeenth-century men, were scarcely, or not at all, imitable. That memorable phrase of Balzac's to his sister, *Sans genre je suis flambe* ("It is all up with me if I have not genius"), might be written over them all. So was it, in a different way, and after the great change of style, with Dryden and Addison, though not quite to the same extent perhaps with Swift. But Swift's style is only applicable to a few purposes, perhaps only to one—that of satirical exposition and comment. Arbuthnot is a first-class Swift, and Cobbett a lower-class one, I imagine that George Warrington wrote like Swift, and I know that Henry Duff Traill did.

<sup>1</sup> Too long to quote, but too delightful not to be more fully indicated. It may be found very conveniently extracted by Mr. Bonai in Sir H. Craik's *English Prose*, iv 589, 590.

<sup>2</sup> "Happy the country whose nobles are thus gifted with the power of reflecting kindred excellence, and of perpetuating national virtue on the broad basis of private friendship"—*The Inheritance*, vol. 1 pp. 49, 50 (London, 1882).

Thackeray (in falsetto) could write like Addison, but nobody else even in that. And who has ever written, except "by and large," like Dryden?

It would not be merely unfair, it would be untrue, to say that Johnson made prose, as Pope is said to have made poetry, "a mere mechanic art." The finer resources of his composition, pointed out above, are by no means mechanical, and it was not his fault if his imitators neglected them or could not reach them. But he undoubtedly did provide something approaching to mechanism—something like "plant," that, used with reasonable care, would turn out a pretty certain and a rather uniform result. Still, this result, in his own case, has qualities—including that just mentioned, but going beyond it—which are very far from mechanical—dignity, if not magnificence, decent architectural scheme of proportion and even ornamentation instead of the examples of drab stucco provided by writers like Middleton, decorous language instead of vulgarity and colloquialism, a clear grammar, a vocabulary sometimes, though not so much as used to be thought, over-Latinised, and constantly injured by the great vice of the century in prose and verse alike—unnecessary and therefore sometimes ludicrous or disgusting periphrasis—but, on the whole, useful and effective, and seldom, if ever (what it has most unjustly been accused of being), tautologous. Above all, he may be said to have restored the consideration of rhythm to an important place in the conditions of English composition. *His* rhythm may be too monotonous in principle (it can hardly be said to be so in practice), and it certainly never, or but occasionally and accidentally, attains the more magical graces in kind—never by any accident the more elaborate in degree. But it is there, and it is even secured and guaranteed, as it had never been before, by the mechanical devices adopted.

This, partly at least, mechanical character makes the style of the first and, in a way, greatest member of the second group of Demiurges in this construction of standard English style easy enough to analyse, that of

the second member is more difficult. Although the superiority of Burke read to Burke heard is one of those things that it is hardly lawful to mention because of their hackneyedness, yet just as it is well to remember that Shakespeare was, after all, a dramatist, it is also well to remember that Burke was, before all, an orator. His *lexis* may have been altogether superior to his *hypocrisis*, but it is quite certain that he always wrote and thought as a speaker. The *Thoughts on a Regicide Peace* and the *Letter to a Noble Lord* are practically as concionatory as any of the actual speeches—and more effectively so. The greatest passages of the *Present Discontents* and the *French Revolution* are oratory pure and simple. Moreover, it is another *constat* that Burke began by the imitation in style, if by the criticism in matter, of Bolingbroke, who was an orator or nothing. Further still, it has been already observed that the whole tendency of style in this century was of the same kind. Even Johnson's, though the complexity of its arrangement, and the excessive dignity of its manner, would make it very tedious to hear, and, except for quick intellects, not too easy to follow, is oratorical in principle, Burke's was so both in principle and in practice.

Now oratorical rhythm *per se* (as has been observed almost to satiety, no doubt) is somewhat limited. But if the orator allows himself any considerable amount of description, illustration, and the like, his range of rhythm becomes largely extended. Burke is said<sup>1</sup> to have expressed it as both his principle and his practice that every "purple" passage should contain, not merely a thought, but an image and a sentiment. The style of the eighteenth century had hitherto busied itself much with thought, to a certain extent with a certain kind of sentiment, but hardly at all with imagery, and the peculiar character both of its thought and of its sentiment had not lent itself to any great variety or fineness.

<sup>1</sup> See De Quincey, *Essay on Rhetoric*. The remark was made to Dr. Lawrence, of *Rolliad* notoriety. As for the principle, I think I have seen it formulated earlier than by Burke, but I cannot remember exactly where.

of rhythmical expression. But imaginative writing, even when the imagination is limited in the Addisonian sense to "images furnished by sight," admits of, and, in fact, demands, an instrument of far more strings, a concert of far more instruments, to express itself, and this was well seen of Burke. His earlier work, indeed, displays little of the good influence. The *Vindication*, as has been said, is partly a parody, partly a direct imitation, of Bolingbroke. As to the *Sublime and Beautiful*, that from one side diverting, from another disappointing work, it is almost sufficient to say that Burke, though he actually concludes it with a section on the sources of these qualities "as found in words," says absolutely nothing of their rhythmical arrangement, even in poetry, but speaks volumes, as to the actual condition of his mind and taste, by preferring Pope's flat paraphrase and "amplification" of Homer's lines on Helen to the exquisite description of Belphebe in Spenser.

In what may be called the "middle" work—which includes most of the *Speeches*, and those *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, which, as has been said, are practically a long speech,—some changes, and even some advances, are visible. Something of the Johnsonian scheme, though with a difference, may be seen in two passages towards the beginning and the end of the *Thoughts*.

To complain of the age we live in, to murmur at the present possessors of power, to lament the past, to conceive extravagant hopes of the future—are the common dispositions of the greatest part of mankind, indeed the necessary effects of the ignorance and levity of the vulgar.<sup>1</sup>

Of what sort of materials must that man be made—how must he be tempered and put together, who can sit whole years in Parliament with five hundred and fifty of his fellow citizens, amidst the storm of such tempestuous passions, in the sharp conflict of so many wits and tempers and characters, in the agitation of such mighty questions, in the accession of such vast and ponderous

<sup>1</sup> The "ignorance and levity of the vulgar" seem to have made some progress since Burke's time. They have learnt to forget "to lament the past."

interests, without seeing any sort of men whose character, conduct, and disposition would lead him to associate himself with them to aid and be aided in any one system of public utility?

To complain of the age we live in,  
to murmur at the present possessors of power,  
to lament the past,  
to conceive extravagant hopes of the future—  
are the common dispositions of the greatest part of mankind,  
indeed, the necessary effects of the ignorance and levity of the vulgar

Of what sort of materials  
must that man be made—  
how must he be tempered and put together,  
who can sit whole years in Parliament  
with five hundred and fifty of his fellow citizens,  
amidst the storm of such tempestuous passions,  
in the sharp conflict of so many wits and tempers and characters,  
in the agitation of such mighty questions,  
in the accession of such vast and ponderous interests,  
without seeing any sort of men  
whose character, conduct, and disposition would lead him to associate  
himself with them  
to aid and be aided in any one system of public utility?

Here, as the typographical disposition will have shown at once, there is rhythm, but rhythm attained almost solely by the parallelism of the members, and the difference of their length and terminations

He manages, however, to get a little more out of the following definite picture (though it is curious to think how much more still might have been got out of that gorge of the Avon, of which good judges have very truly said that if it were anywhere but in England it would be one of the sights of the world)

As for the trifling petulance which the rage of party stirs up in little minds, though it should show itself even in this court, it has not made the slightest impression on me. The highest flight of such clamorous birds is winged in an inferior region of the air. We hear them, and we look upon them, just as you, gentlemen, when you enjoy the serene air on your lofty rocks, look down upon the gulls that skim the mud of your river when it is exhausted of its tide.

This has not a little merit, though both the rocks

and the gulls might have their attributes amplified and cadenced further with no small profit

But it was not till the last glorious decade of Burke's life—when he at last gave up to mankind what had too frequently before been restricted to party, and showed himself the Apollo of the loathsome reptiles, the St Michael of the hideous fiends who were uncivilising Europe—that he attained the full majesty of his style. There is no need to seek for instances, the two most famous and best known passages have never, at least to my knowledge, been analysed from this special point of view before, and will “amply repay the expense” of such analysis here

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles, and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom, little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her, in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiments and heroic enterprise is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

How often has this passage been laughed at<sup>1</sup> and how easy it is to laugh at it! I am not talking of those who follow the smug respectability of Mackintosh in taking briefs from Mr Attorney Hébert and Mr Solicitor Chaumette as to Marie Antoinette's character. But it is a passage undoubtedly sentimental, and you can make fun of sentiment as easily as you can trample flowers in mud. Yet if any one can regard it impartially, and (as he must be able to do if he has any critical faculty at all) forget jokes about "the cheap defence of nations" and so forth, he will be puzzled to find in English, for more than a century before it, a more beautiful passage merely as harmonious phrase. The rhythm is still generally of the kind we have been discussing—stepped and paralleled and balanced. Except in these ways, the author's chief device of variation and harmonic contrast is connected (as we have seen had become usual since Addison) with the ends of the clauses and sentences—"years" and "at Versailles", "orb," "touch," but then "vision", the descents of the two next sentences to the contrasted monosyllables of "joy" and "fall", and so throughout<sup>1</sup>. But, in its own way, in the juxtaposition of long sentences and short, of rising and falling clauses, even, a new thing to be thought of, or rather an old one revived, in the vowel-sound of the paralleled word-groups "that sensibility of principle," "that chastity of honour,"—the thing is a masterpiece—a little in *bravura* perhaps to those who, while doing its form justice, do not sympathise with its matter, but certainly something much above *bravura* to those who do.

Through the same plan of a conformity to nature in our artificial institutions, and by calling in the aid of her unerring and powerful instincts, to fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of our reason, we have derived several other, and those no small benefits, from considering our liberties in the light of an inheritance. Always

<sup>1</sup> Not, however, wholly. The scansion given of portions might have been carried throughout with no violence and some advantage. But the rhythm is still, largely if not mainly, a rhythm of sections.

acting as if in the presence of canonized forefathers, the spirit of freedom, leading in itself to misrule and excess, is tempered with an awful gravity. This idea of a liberal descent inspires us with a sense of habitual native dignity, which prevents that upstart insolence almost inevitably adhering to and disgracing those who are the first acquirers of any distinction. By this means our liberty becomes a noble freedom. It carries an imposing and majestic aspect. It has a pedigree and illustrating ancestors. It has its bearings and its ensigns armorial. It has its galleries of portraits, its monumental inscriptions, its records, evidences, and titles. We procure reverence to our civil institutions on the principle upon which nature teaches us to revere individual men, on account of their age, and on account of those from whom they are descended. All your sophisters cannot produce anything better adapted to preserve a rational and manly freedom than the course that we have pursued, who have chosen our nature rather than our speculations, our breasts rather than our inventions, for the great conservatories and magazines of our rights and privileges.

The substance of this extract requires and receives a setting on a graver and quieter motive. It has some familiar rhetorical devices, such as the abundance of epanaphora or repetition of the same initial words, "It has," etc. Its long sentences shorten in the central group, and then swell out towards the end in an equally ceremonial fashion. Nowhere, perhaps, is the trick of expanding parallel clauses more admirably applicable than in those of the last sentence, and in one point—the inversion and the splendid vowel-music of "ensigns armorial"—we see revived the grandest manner of the seventeenth century itself.

But the passage on which Burke is said to have most specially prided himself is the great utilising, in the *Letter to the Duke of Bedford*, of the scenery, the history, and the lesson of Windsor Castle.

Such | are | their | ideas, | such | their | religion, | and | such |  
 their | law | But | as | to | our | country | and | our | race, | as | long | as |  
 the | well-compacted | structure | of | our | church | and | state, | the  
 sanctuary, | the | holy | of | holies | of | that | ancient | law, | defended | by  
 reverence, | defended | by | power, | a | fortress | at | once | and | a | temple, |



shall stand | inviolate | on the brow | of the British | Sion— | as  
 long | as the British | monarchy, | not more limited | than fenced |  
 by the orders | of the state, | shall, | like the proud | Keep | of  
 Windsor, | rising | in the majesty | of proportion, | and girt | with  
 the double | belt | of its kindred | and coeval | towers, | as long as |  
 this awful | structure | shall oversee | and guard | the subjected  
 land— | so long | the mounds | and dykes | of the low | fat |  
 Bedford | level | will have nothing | to fear | from all | the pickaxes |  
 of all | the levellers | of France | As long as | our sovereign |  
 Lord | the King, | and his faithful | subjects, | the Lords | and  
 Commons | of this realm,— | the triple | cord, | which no man | can  
 break, | the solemn, | sworn | constitutional | frank-pledge | of this  
 nation, | the firm | guarantees | of each other's | being | and each  
 other's | rights, | the joint | and several | securities, | each | in its  
 place | and order, | for every | kind | and every | quality | of  
 property | and of dignity,— | as long as | these | endure, | so long |  
 the Duke | of Bedford | is safe | and we are all | safe | together—  
 the high | from the blights | of envy | and the spoiliations | of  
 rapacity, | the low | from the iron | hand | of oppression | and the  
 insolent | spurn | of contempt<sup>1</sup>

It would take pages to bring out even the most strictly  
 rhythmical characteristics of this wonderful *tour de force*,  
 for there is hardly a word, save the merest particles, which  
 does not contribute to the effect. The antithetic emphasis  
 of "their" and "our", the arrangement of "ideas,"  
 "religion," and "law", the climax of the clause from  
 "But as" to "Sion," and the parallel description of

<sup>1</sup> The quotation *coda* in the original is rhetorically separable, and there are  
 reasons at the present moment for separating and presenting it only in a  
 note. May it soon be restored to the text!

"Amen!" and so be it and so it will be,

Dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum  
 Accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit "

Windsor itself, the splendour of the "kindred and coeval towers", the touch of the *xenon*—the strange arresting word—in "frank-pledge", the ironic drawl of "the low | fat | Bedford | level", the ordered processional and recessional of cadences to the close—all this cannot be beaten in the style. You may like some other style better if you please. I myself prefer several others. But if you do not like this, if you do not see the mastery and the beauty of this, there is a blind facet to your eye for style, a deaf spot in the drum of your ear for rhythm.

Even if the gossip about this passage were only gossip, there could be no doubt that the man who wrote it was deliberately aiming at the Longinian "Sublime"—at a "height of eloquence" which should be far above, and widely separated from, any mere "naked, natural way of speaking," or any conversational norm, even conventionally clothed beyond the naked and raised above the natural. It is, of course, open to that vague and vernacular charge of being "stilted," which is the usual refuge of the Philistine in self-defence. It is open likewise to a subtler objection, one less easy also to ignore, that its method has something of Rhetoric, if not in the bad sense, at any rate in that which her biographer and exponent, Martianus, somewhat slyly touched when he said that "she can do nothing *quietly*." We may go even further and admit that it evades, rather than definitely discards, the fault of all eighteenth-century style, that of being too sharply divided into blocks. Burke might "wind into a subject like a serpent," as far as his argumentative and expository manner was concerned, but he certainly did not serpentine so much as *échelon* his form. The noiseless, foamless, irresistible tide of words in which Browne is the greatest magician, and which some nineteenth-century writers have mastered not ill, is not for Burke. But the modes of majesty are many, and he has displayed more than one. Above all, he has shown (and his great reputation and influence made the exhibition operative in almost the highest degree) that majesty is compatible with clearness, with order, and with an abstinence from any

excessive indulgence in unusual or unfamiliar words. The style and the rhythm of Burke are still "classical," but they employ all the ornament that a classical style admits.

Although some recent attempts to depreciate Coleridge as a critic are merely negligible, everybody knows, or should know, that his genius occasionally indulged itself in the most uncritical utterances possible. And of these the observation that "Gibbon's manner is the worst of all" ranks pretty high, or low, according to calculus. In fact, the earlier Romantics, though they found less fault with Burke than with Gibbon himself or with Johnson, very naturally did not like any one of the three great beautifiers of the Augustan style much. We have none of their causes of prejudice, and we ought to be able to see the merits of both orders.

Those of Gibbon, from our present point of view, are certainly extraordinary. As a *constant* master of prose rhythm he seems to me the superior both of Johnson and of Burke, and he is certainly less open to the charge of visible skeleton-clock mechanism than the one, or to the reproach of calculated purple patches than the other. The only valid objection that I know against his harmony is that it is monotonous, and I am by no means sure that this is not very much a matter of taste. Once more, one would not like all literature to be Gibbon, but one may be very well satisfied with that part of literature which is. Moreover, if it is a merit that a writer's sources of rhythm should not be too easily perceptible, Gibbon may certainly claim it. I have admired and enjoyed his style for at least half a century, and I have more than once or twice endeavoured to give critical account of it, but its secret, though perfectly easy to feel, is very difficult to describe precisely. Take two passages, one from the *Decline and Fall*, the other from the *Memoirs*.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I know, of course, that the *textus receptus* of the *Memoirs* is apparently a "made-up" one. But if so, Lord Sheffield must have been an exceedingly clever maker up, and I wish all editors who pursue the doubtful art of text making had possessed his skill.

The protection of the Rhætan frontier and the persecution of the Catholic church detained Constantius in Italy above eighteen months after the departure of Julian. Before the emperor returned into the East, he indulged his pride and curiosity in a visit to the ancient capital. He proceeded from Milan to Rome along the Æmilian and Flaminian ways, and, as soon as he approached within forty miles of the city, the march of a prince who had never vanquished a foreign enemy assumed the appearance of a triumphal procession. His splendid train was composed of all the ministers of luxury, but in a time of profound peace, he was encompassed by the glittering arms of the numerous squadrons of his guards and curassiers. Their streaming banners of silk, embossed with gold, and shaped in the form of dragons, waved round the person of the emperor. Constantius sat alone on a lofty car resplendent with gold and precious gems, and, except when he bowed his head to pass under the gates of the cities, he affected a stately demeanour of inflexible and, as it might seem, of insensible gravity. The severe discipline of the Persian youth had been introduced by the eunuchs into the imperial palace, and such were the habits of patience which they had inculcated, that during a slow and sultry march, he was never seen to move his hand towards his face, or to turn his eyes either to the right or to the left. He was received by the magistrates and senate of Rome, and the emperor surveyed with attention the civil honours of the republic and the consular images of the noble families. The streets were lined with an innumerable multitude. Their repeated acclamations expressed their joy at beholding, after an absence of thirty-two years, the sacred person of their sovereign, and Constantius himself expressed, with some pleasantry, his affected surprise that the human race should thus suddenly be collected on the same spot. The son of Constantine was lodged in the ancient palace of Augustus, he presided in the Senate, harangued the people from the tribunal which Cicero had so often ascended, assisted with unusual courtesy at the games of the circus, and accepted the crowns of gold, as well as the panegyrics which had been prepared for the ceremony by the *deputies of the principal cities*. His short visit of thirty days was employed in viewing the monuments of art and power, which were scattered over the seven hills and the interjacent valleys. He admired the awful majesty of the capital, the vast extent of the baths of Caracalla and Diocletian, the severe simplicity of the Pantheon, the massy greatness of the amphitheatre of Titus, the elegant architecture of the theatre of Pompey and the temple of peace, and, above all, the stately structure of the forum and column of Trajan, acknowledging that the voice of fame, so prone to invent and to magnify, had made an inadequate report of the metropolis of the world. The traveller, who has contemplated the ruins of ancient Rome, may conceive some imperfect idea of the sentiments which they must have

inspired when they reared their heads in the splendour of unsullied beauty<sup>1</sup>

I am disgusted with the affectation of men of letters who complain that they have renounced a substance for a shadow, and that their fame (which sometimes is no insupportable weight) affords a poor compensation for envy, censure, and persecution. My own experience, at least, has taught me a very different lesson. Twenty happy years have been animated by the labour of my history, and its success has given me a name, a rank, a character in the world, to which I should not otherwise have been entitled. The freedom of my writings has indeed provoked an implacable tribe, but as I was safe from the stings, I was soon accustomed to the buzzing of the hornets. My nerves are not tremblingly alive, and my literary temper is so happily framed, that I am less sensible of pain than of pleasure. The rational pride of an author may be offended rather than flattered by vague indiscriminate praise, but he cannot, he should not, be indifferent to the fair testimonies of private and public esteem. Even his moral sympathy may be gratified by the idea that now, in the present hour, he is imparting some degree of amusement or knowledge to his friends in a distant land: that one day his mind will be familiar to the grandchildren of those who are yet unborn. I cannot boast of the friendship or favour of princes, the patronage of English literature has long since been devolved on our booksellers, and the measure of their liberality is the least ambiguous test of our common success. Perhaps the golden mediocrity of my fortune has contributed to fortify my application.

The present is a fleeting moment, the past is no more, and our prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful. This day may possibly be my last, but the laws of probability, so true in general, so fallacious

---

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon's everlasting irony is assisted by rhythm, if it can hardly be said to form a part thereof. "The protection | of the Rhætian | frontier | and the persecution | of the Catholic | church" marks the alliance early here. And his constant allusive periphrasis or parenthesis ("who had never vanquished a foreign enemy," "the son of Constantine," "from the tribunal which Cicero had so often ascended") stands in somewhat similar relation to it. For actual cadences some have noted a recession or rescission

towards trochaic ending, as in "after the de|parture of | Jūlian," and several other similar passages, one of which is italicised above. But, in the first place, this does not seem to me a prose, but rather a verse, scansion. I

should arrange it—"after | the de|parture | of Jūlian", thus giving that juxta position of pæon (chiefly *thurā*) and amphibrach which will be found almost omnipresent in Gibbon, and which *may* be a proximate cause of his peculiar undulation. And if the whole of the sentence-ends be examined, it will be found that not merely trochees but dactyls, not merely dactyls but anapæsts, iambs, and even long monosyllables, are quite sufficiently represented at the closes. Perhaps I ought to have scanned more of Gibbon, but, as in some other cases, I thought it might be left to the reader.

in particular, still allow me about fifteen years I shall soon enter into the period which, as the most agreeable of his long life, was selected by the judgment and experience of the sage Fontenelle. His choice is approved by the eloquent historian of nature, who fixes our moral happiness to the mature season in which our passions are supposed to have calmed, our duties fulfilled, our ambition satisfied, our fame and fortune established on a solid basis. In private conversation, that great and amiable man added the weight of his own experience, and this autumnal felicity might be exemplified in the lives of Voltaire, Hume, and many other men of letters. I am far more inclined to embrace than to dispute this comfortable doctrine. I will not suppose any premature decay of the mind or body, but I must reluctantly observe that two causes, the abbreviation of time, and the failure of hope, will always tinge with a browner shade the evening of life.<sup>1</sup>

Here it may be observed that though both these passages are fine, and the second is famous, this latter does not exhibit so much of Gibbon's characteristic style and rhythm as the first. This may be due negatively to Gibbon's having never "passed it for publication," or positively to some manipulation of Sheffield's, but of the fact there can be little dispute. Except perhaps in the more imaginative tone and colour of the well-known last phrase (where "brown" is undoubtedly a reminiscence of Dryden<sup>2</sup>), the autobiographic peroration is much more any gentleman's style at the period in perfection (for the gentleman certainly is not one of the "mob" of his kind) than any particular gentleman's. With the first it is different. Some minor devices of its peculiar effect—rhythmical and other—can be identified without difficulty. The ear of the eighteenth century had been as a rule dull (though we saw something of sensibility in Addison's) to the musical advantages of proper names. Gibbon's special subject supplied him with these lavishly, and his special genius enabled him to use them to excellent effect. He

<sup>1</sup> "Which sometimes is no insupportable weight" and "the eloquent historian of nature" continue to exemplify the points noted in reference to the other passages. The omission of the first, and the substitution of "Buffon" for the second, would entirely do away with the wave effect.

<sup>2</sup> Some may interject "Gray?" But that free borrower's "broader browner shade" is not quite parallel, and in any case is most likely a reminiscence of the elder poet's peculiar use of "brown," as in "brown horror" for "night," and elsewhere.

retained the general system of antithetic balance, and of "step" or "telescope" arrangement. But he contrived—in a fashion already confessed as easier to feel than strictly to define—to impress on his clauses, sentences, sentence-groups, and paragraphs, a peculiar undulating movement which, except occasionally and accidentally, I cannot remember in any writer before him. This undulatory or oscillatory motion is distinguished from that of Hooker by the fact that it does not so much sink at the close as maintain itself at a level—from which the movement of the next will somehow start. It may seem at first sight preposterous to compare the Gibbonian sentence with the Spenserian stanza, yet they are, when considered carefully, alike in their combined faculty of achieving rhythmical completeness in the individual and at the same time handing on the movement to the next member.

I do not mean to say that Gibbon was at first as much imitated as Johnson and Burke were in the direct way, what I wish to point out is that all three represent different ways of heightening the plain Augustan style without making it distinctly ornate, much less flamboyant. And there resulted, from the tendencies of which these three were the most distinguished examples in the third and fourth quarters of the century, that "standard Georgian" style, the existence of which has been sometimes denied and oftener ignored, but which certainly reigned at the close of that century, and for almost the first quarter of the nineteenth. This style continued to be regarded as the style at which regular teaching of composition should aim, and even at the present day, after two great outbursts of actual flamboyance, after divers recrudescences of slovenliness, and through almost innumerable forms of individual eccentricity, from those of Carlyle and Meredith to those of Cluvienus and myself, it remains with a quasi-Attic reputation, and is practised by those who aim at being classics. This is the style of which Southey is perhaps the most perfect and almost the earliest representative, but which everybody of his generation, with the exception of a very few neoterics, to

be noticed in the next chapter, wrote in more or less perfection, according as his own genius and industry would let him

The motto of this style, and the secret of its apparent perennality, is once more old. In rhythm, as in everything else, *ars est celare artem*. Take two famous passages of Southey's own, the immortal close of the *Life of Nelson*, and the peroration of his reply to the egregious William Smith in the *Wat Tyler* matter. They are both, of course, somewhat "in full dress," but every one who knows—and it is melancholy to think how few there are probably who do know—not merely the *Life of Nelson*, but that of Wesley, and those of the "Admirals," and many others, *Espriella* and *Omniana*, the *Colloquies*, which extorted from Macaulay that amusing mixture of partisan attack and scholarly acknowledgment, the *Histories*, and above all the abounding and delightful *Doctor*—knows that Southey could carry the style not merely up to this full dress without undue parade, but down to the very extreme of what the century of his birth would have called "an agreeable *négligé*," without ever trenching on vulgarity, or losing distinction.

There was reason to suppose, from the appearances upon opening the body, that in the course of nature he might have attained, like his father, to a good old age. Yet he cannot be said to have fallen prematurely whose work is done, nor ought he to be lamented, who died so full of honours, and at the height of human fame. The most triumphant death is that of the martyr, the most awful, that of the martyred patriot, the most splendid, that of the hero in the hour of victory, and if the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory. He has left us, not indeed his mantle of inspiration, but a name and an example, which are at this hour inspiring hundreds of the youth of England—a name which is our pride, and an example which will continue to be our shield and our strength.

How far the writings of Mr Southey may be found to deserve a favourable acceptance from after ages time will decide, but a name which, whether worthily or not, has been conspicuous in the literary history of its age, will certainly not perish. Some account of his life will always be prefixed to his works, and transferred to literary



histories, and to the biographical dictionaries not only of this but of other countries. There it will be related of him that he lived in the bosom of his family in absolute retirement, that in all his writings there breathed the same abhorrence of oppression and immorality, the same spirit of devotion, and the same ardent wishes for the melioration of mankind, and that the only charge which malice could bring against him was that, as he grew older, his opinions altered concerning the means by which the melioration was to be effected, and that, as he learned to understand the institutions of his country, he learned to appreciate them rightly, to love, and to revere, and to defend them. It will be said of him that, in an age of personality, he abstained from satire, and that during the course of his literary life, often as he was assailed, the only occasion on which he ever condescended to reply was when a certain Mr William Smith insulted him in Parliament with the appellation of renegade. On that occasion it will be said that he vindicated himself as it became him to do, and treated his calumniator with just and memorable severity. Whether it shall be added that Mr William Smith redeemed his own character by coming forward with honest manliness and acknowledging that he had spoken rashly and unjustly concerns himself, but is not of the slightest importance to me.

There are so many things to be said about this style, and it might be illustrated from so many persons, that the whole of this chapter, nay, a very large part of this volume, would hardly be too much for the examples. But speaking by the card, and considering rhythmically, its note is, beyond all doubt, the adjustment of cadence and symphony to matter, in such proportion and fashion that you never feel the want of rhythmical and sonorous quality, but at the same time are rarely tempted to concentrate your attention on this. All does not exactly depend upon the subject, but all is subordinated to it. Of the generalities, however, the following Interchapter should better speak

### INTERCHAPTER III

THE general character of the rhythm of Augustanism and post-Augustanism in prose was foreshadowed in the remarks made at the close of Interchapter II concerning that of the seventeenth-century ornate style, to which it is, here as in all other ways, a direct opposite. To say that it has none would be incorrect and in fact absurd, for, as has been observed before, entirely unrhythmical prose is almost impossible, the merest conversation having its accents and its emphases—though it is true that very clumsy writing may have little rhythm, and that little ugly. It is the character of the rhythm that is changed, and in the investigation of this change there is not a little interest. ●

In prose, as in verse, the set of the general taste was now direct against polyphony. Just as, in the songs of Apollo, they discouraged stanzas and sonnets and fantastically outlined forms of lyric, so, in the words of Mercury, they turned their backs on many-centred harmony of internal composition, in clause and sentence and paragraph, preferring either the merely conversational flow with as little emphasis as possible, or the "methods of the declaimer"—clauses of different length indeed, but arranged in parallel, and partitioned off from each other at the ends, by some definite similarity or contrast like that of rhyme, rather than distinguished throughout by modulation of cadence from beginning to end. And when (for the most part later) they began to aim at heightening effect, and at superadding or at least developing ornament, they could hardly avoid falling into stereotyped moulds of it, as most notably of all in Johnson, but not much less in Gibbon and even in Burke.

At first, and especially in Dryden, the characteristic defects and mannerisms of the style are somewhat masked. There should be little doubt, for any one who has considered the subject from our present point of view, that Dryden is not merely one of the greatest, but one of the most puzzling masters of English prose. His ambidexterity with the two harmonies led him to confine his higher, or at least highest, strains to verse, and we can only guess what things like the opening of *Religio Laici*, the famous "consideration of Life" in *Aurengzebe*, the passage of the "wandering fires" in *The Hind and the Panther*, and others, would have been in prose. But his existing production in that kind, limited as it is to "middle subjects"—occupied almost wholly with easy exposition, literary criticism, and popular dialectics—remains an extraordinary monument of combined earliness and accomplishment. There had been nothing like it before, and, modern as it is in some ways, there has been nothing like it since. But one thing we may notice which it has in common with all its kind, and that is the small handle which it gives to regular rhythmical analysis. It is only in show-pieces like the famous encomium on Shakespeare at the beginning, and that, which should be almost equally famous, on Chaucer at the end, that definite rhythm disengages itself from a pleasant stream of talk, or a workmanlike tissue of argument, infinitely better, of course, than talk and argument usually are, but with nothing of the set piece about it, and with no ostensible art at all.

Dryden was Addison's master in style, and there can be little doubt that he acted in the same capacity, though in a different fashion, to ungrateful "cousin Swift." If we contrast his rhythm with, for instance, Temple's, striking differences occur. There is nothing like that famous *coda* of the poetry passage<sup>1</sup> in Dryden's prose, and there is certainly nothing like it in Swift or in Addison.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *V* *sup* p 237

<sup>2</sup> Compare the "Westminster Abbey," which approaches it very closely in possibilities of modulation

But the undulating irony of both the younger men, whether in its less pronounced and more insinuating form, as with Addison, or in its sharper and harder temper, as with Swift, is, if not directly copied from Dryden, a further carrying out of the same principles which made his. Whether Hurd was right in thinking that Addison paid conscious attention to the values of his clause-endings, it is hard to say. I have admitted it to be not impossible, while declining to consider it as very important. But it is certain that in all these writers, including Berkeley, who is perhaps in form the best of them all, the greater number of the *kola* do not invite elaborate rhythmical analysis, while the conclusions, and the total effect of the contrasted or paralleled groups, do invite it.

But, in most of the more formal writing of the eighteenth century, the conversational tone passes into the oratorical, and the echo of the speech, the sermon, or the lecture, besets the weary ear throughout. In letters and in fiction, though in both it sometimes likewise mounts the rostrum, it sinks or descends again to mere talk which is not unpleasant—it “says” very well, but it never reaches prose “singing.” And in a great deal of the prose of the first half of the century, as has been pointed out above, the absence of accompaniment—of sound to the sense, of music to the meaning—becomes, if not, as it sometimes is, positively disgusting, uninteresting to the highest degree.

The means by which the three great style-raisers of the later century—Johnson, Burke, and Gibbon—endeavoured to effect their objects have been carefully examined. It will probably have suggested itself already to some readers that they could not achieve complete success because they omitted to provide themselves with a sufficient reinforcement of “beautiful words”—of those words which at once force colour and outline on the mind’s eye, sound and echo on the mind’s ear. A remorseless restriction to the understanding—and that no very deep one neither—still prevailed, especially in Johnson, who, moreover, though he excogitated a machine

of sentence-production, sonorous enough and not ill-formed, left it, and could not but leave it, a machine<sup>1</sup>

Nor, though they went a little farther in the right direction, could Burke's varied appeal to the sentiments and sometimes to the actual senses, Gibbon's gorgeous historical pageantry of background and panorama of action, entirely supply that fatal lack of variety which is the curse of this whole period and department of prose. Nevertheless, the standard style, which resulted from these attempts to raise the plain, may undoubtedly, in its best results at any rate, claim a very high place. Unless Mr Earle was right in thinking that the style of the tenth century was such another—a flight to which I cannot reach—I do not know any similar achievement in English prose history—considering prose for the moment as “the instrument of the average purpose.” It is not so good as Dryden's, but it is certainly more adaptable and slightly more universal in application, not to mention that there is not about it, as there is about Dryden's, anything intrinsically inimitable. To write it with the perfect ease of Southey is indeed not for everybody, but to write this style with adequacy and dignity is within the reach of any educated person who chooses and cares. If there is an educated person who does not care or choose, why he must be, and if he is a person of sense as well as education, is, prepared to pay the penalty. You may have your own style at your own risk, this patented and minted common-form remains open, to you and to all, at none.

Nor, until the language alters more than it has done for at least a hundred and fifty years, and in a fashion, as distinguished from a degree, of which there has been no sign for nearly two hundred and fifty, does it seem likely that this style will ever grow obsolete. It corresponds in

<sup>1</sup> There are, of course, sentences of his which far transcend machinery, such as that given by Boswell from the MS “Collection for the *Rambler*”—“The world lies all enamelled before him, as a distant prospect sun-gilt” where the remarkable effect of the final compound, as supplying one of the missing “beautiful words,” will be felt at once. There are others, besides the well known Iona passage, in the *Journey to the Western Isles*, and yet others outside of it. But the sentence in the text remains, I think, generally true.

English to the style introduced by Descartes, or first strikingly exemplified by him, in France a generation or two before anything approaching it was seen with us, but it is, as suits the language, more tolerant—though still not very tolerant—of neologism. Like the Cartesian medium, it is perhaps rather free from faults than provided with beauties, but while it is eminently unobjectionable, its attractions are not purely negative. If it has not exactly beauty (and how little it wants to attain that we shall see when we come to such a slight beautification or beatification of it as Newman's), it has that comeliness, ease, and unobtrusive complaisance to circumstance, which some persons, not extremely given to paradox, have, for ordinary occasions at any rate, extolled above beauty in women, and art, and scenery, and other companions and conditions of life.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE REVIVAL OF RHYTHMICAL ELABORATION

The necessity of reaction—Its causes and bents—Preoccupation of the ground by poetry, the Lake group and Scott—Byron, Shelley, and Keats—The minors Moore—*The Epicurean*—Return to Coleridge in *Anima Poetae*—General descriptive character of these early passages—The three chief pioneers—De Quincey—Specimen phrases and passages, with analysis and comment—The *Dream-Fugue* and the *Suspiria* the chief quarries—Elaborate rhythm by no means often aimed at elsewhere—Its connection with dream—The *Suspiria* again—The *Autobiography*—De Quincey's relation to poetry—Wilson—Landon his characteristics—The relations of his poetry and his prose—His critical utterances on the subject—Results in a "prose grand style"—Specimens—Some general observations—The four kinds of rhythm in relation to prose—I Non-prosaic rhythm or poetry—II Hybrid verse-prose—III Pure prose highly rhythmized—IV Prose in general

ALLOWANCE (not, I think, ungenerous) has been made, at the close of the preceding Interchapter, for the merits in rhythm, as in other ways, of the Augustan and post-Augustan style, and of the standard development of it. But I do not pretend that this attitude is anything more than judicial, or that, in my personal preference, even the finest examples, actual or conceivable, of this order of style and rhythm can vie with the ornater examples given by the sixteenth and<sup>st</sup> seventeenth centuries. Nor can I quite understand how any one, unless blinded by the enchantments of that deceiving dame Grammar, or regarding Prose as not at all, or not in the main, an instrument of delight, can prefer it. Beauty, of course, may be this to thee and that to me, but it scarcely admits of denial

that Augustan and standard prose is comparatively destitute of that Variety which has been recognised of old, by Classical as well as by Romantic criticism, as the essential virtue of beautiful prose, when it ceases to be a mere lorry for conveying the burden of brute meaning

At any rate, and however this may be, it was certain that, after so long a prevalence of the plainly phrased and faintly or mechanically rhythmized style, the opposite kind would have its turn

For, besides the effect of the general law of revolution and compensation, almost all the particular agencies, in what is commonly called the Romantic Revival, made in this direction. "The taste for the picturesque"<sup>1</sup> not merely, in writings about that subject, forced the use of a more gorgeous and highly coloured—which necessarily means a more variously and intricately rhythmized—style, but independently encouraged the desire for one. The taste for the exotic multiplied and complicated the vocabulary with new and strange-sounding words. The reverence for Elizabethan and seventeenth-century literature revealed the buried magnificences which had been so long ignored. The great development of critical appreciation, as distinguished from rule-criticism, could not leave the finer styles untried or untasted. And, finally, the same movement against monotony, uniformity, convention, which was breaking up the tyranny of the heroic couplet in verse, almost necessitated the return to complicated values and irregular outlines in prose. In one sense, indeed, the return to flamboyant and polyphonic prose was simply a further development of the very movements which had effected the raising of post-Augustan style itself. Johnson had learnt not a little from Browne, but he might have learnt, and others did learn, a great deal more. Burke's alleged trinity of "sentiment, idea, and image" wanted but little to become a quaternity by the addition of "musical presentment"

<sup>1</sup> If I were writing at greater length, I should like to show, from Gilpin, where the earlier picturesque writers came short. Gray's often quoted "Sunrise" passage, in a late letter to Bonstetten, is, naturally, further advanced



While if Gibbon had had more frequent touches of poetry, and had not been content with the stately but slightly monotoned, if not monotonous, splendour of the main rhythm which he had once achieved, there is no knowing what he might not have done in this direction

For a time, however, according to the general course of literary history, poetry absorbed the chief attention and displayed the chief results. All the great poets of the Revival (I must ask for a moment's grace as to Scott), were good prose-writers. But by far the larger number of them, and of those who rank next, kept to the older style in prose. Southey, the least of them as a poet, was the greatest as a prose-man, but he is also the greatest treader of the standard *via media*, and has been already selected as such. Wordsworth, if not so great a master of prose as De Quincey would have him to be, was certainly a master of it, but the wind of the spirit, which takes him off his legs now and then in verse, seldom disturbs their peaceable prosaic progression<sup>1</sup>. We may now, thanks to Mr Ernest Coleridge and to *Anima Poetae*,<sup>2</sup> claim Coleridge, the almost universal pioneer, as a pioneer here also, and we shall return to him accordingly. But, except in these long-unpublished fragments and jottings, he hardly displays himself as a master of ornateness in prose, while his frankly confessed envy of Southey's style, and vivid denunciation of his own sentences as "Surinam toads with their young ones clinging all round them," is well known.

As for Scott, if we had to do with a general history of prose style, instead of a history of one aspect of it, *multipliciter distinguendum esset*. The vulgar depreciation

<sup>1</sup> An exception may be expected for *The Convention of Cantra*, in which, by the way, De Quincey himself had a revising hand. The passionate dignity of that noble composition certainly shall not be denied or belittled here. But it is, naturally enough, almost pure Burke in rhythm, as in style generally. "A highway of adamant for the sorrowful steps of generation after generation" is admirable, but scarcely *new*. Even "in the midst of the woods, the rivers, the mountains, the sunshine and shadows of some transcendent landscape," "transcendent" is a "book word," almost a "*gradus* epithet," not a *mot propre* or a *mot de lumière*.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1895

of him is here almost more of a vulgar error than is the case in regard to his verse. Occasional carelessness, due to invariable haste of composition, is the only part of the indictment that can be sustained. But as regards elaborately rhythmical prose, every one, of course, must allow that he did not practise it as a rule. There are great exceptions, chiefly in dialogue, or in what may be called dramatic passages. The two finest of all are, I think, the incomparable denunciation of Claverhouse by Habakkuk Mucklewrath,<sup>1</sup> and that, if less tragical, almost equally fine, invective of Meg Merrilies,<sup>2</sup> which the great Lord Derby flung in those faces of Liberals who called

<sup>1</sup> "And thou | who hast partaken | of the wine cup | of fury, | and hast been drunken | and mad | because thereof, | the wish | of thy heart | shall be granted | to thy loss, | and the hope | of thine own pride | shall destroy thee | " If anybody says, "Oh, Biblical rhythm, and even the very words," let him be good enough to observe that, if the first clause is Biblical in phrase and arrangement, the second is not, while it might do him no harm to notice also the skill with which the variation "*thy* heart," but "*thine own* pride," obviates, at once, monotonous *parosisis* and too metrical rhythm.

<sup>2</sup> "Ride your ways," | said the gipsy, | "ride your ways, | Laird | of Ellangowan— | ride your ways, | Godfrey | Bertram— | This day | have ye quenched | seven | smoking | hearths— | see | if the fire | in your ain | parlour | burn | the blither | for that | Ye have riven | the thack | off seven | cottar | houses— | look | if your ain | roof tree | stand | the faster —Ye may stable | your stirks | in the shealings | at Derrcleugh— | see | that the hare | does not couch | on the hearthstane | at Ellangowan — Ride your ways, | Godfrey | Bertram— | what | do ye glower | after our folk | for — | There's thirty | hearts there | that wad hae wanted | bread | ere ye | had wanted | sunkets, | and spent | their life blood | ere ye | had scratched | your finger | Yes — | there's thirty | yonder, | from the auld wife | of a hundred | to the babe | that was born | last week, | that ye have turned | out o' their bits | o' bields, | to sleep | with the tod | and the blackcock | in the muirs — | Ride your ways, | Ellangowan, | —Our barns | are hinging | at our weary | backs— | look | that your braw cradle | at hame | be the fairer | spread up | [not that I am wishing ill to

themselves Churchmen, in connection with the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. Many others could, of course, be added, but it would be needless for lovers of Scott, and useless for others. And it is, no doubt, a fact that, in narrative, description, and so forth, he was merely a "standard" man, not always quite so careful as that standard requires, but by no means always so careless as the critical "populace" will have him to be.

Of the three younger members of the Seven, Byron was, usually, eighteenth century or nothing in his prose, and Keats wrote too little, except in jocular or passionate privacy, to need much consideration here. On the other hand, Shelley's prose, elaborately descriptive as some of it is, and enthusiastic as some of the rest may be, is decidedly nearer to the standard than to the ornate kind—a fact which perhaps had something to do with Matthew Arnold's apparently fantastic preference of it over the verse. This opinion may possibly disappoint some readers, and shock others. But I am not afraid that any one who knows the *History of Prosody* will question my appreciation of Shelley, and the opinion is the result of many years' reading, constantly refreshed. In the *Defence of Poetry*, in the Platonic translations, and in the descriptive parts of the letters, there are, of course, passages of the first beauty as prose. But (and this is not in the least wonderful when we remember that, when he wanted Polyhymnia, she was always ready for him in her own singing robes) it will constantly be found to be what we may call super-poetised Burke—antithetical and oratorical in general scheme. In a most careful recent scrutiny I have found

---

*little Harry, or to the babe that's yet to be born—God forbid, and make them  
kind to the poor, and better folk than their father* !—And now, | ride | e'en |  
your ways, | for these | are the last words | ye'll ever hear | Meg Merrihes |  
speak, | and this | is the last reise | that I'll ever cut | in the bonny | woods |  
of Ellangowan "

I have bracketed and italicised one clause because it is of the nature of a parenthetic aside, descending purposely to merely colloquial rhythm

but a very few passages which distinctly class themselves as of the newer type, such as this

It is | as it were | the inter|penetration | of a diviner | nature |  
 through our own , | but its footsteps | are like those | of a wind | over  
 the sea, | which the coming | calm | erases | and whose traces |  
 remain only | as the wrinkled | sand | which waves it

There is no mistake about *that* , but what follows ?

These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination , and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire

Is there any fault to be found with this ? None , but it does not pretend to the more composite rhythm, and though you can "foot it" well enough, it lends itself much more naturally to the "section" division of standard prose. And so, I think, generally, if not always

Of those who attain not to the Seven, Campbell is in prose merely an inferior Southey , but Moore, who has been a stumbling-block to the majority of critics in relation to his verse, occupies a rather ambiguous position in relation to his prose. *The Epicurean* contains things (examples will be given presently) which deserve by no means low rank as specimens of elaborate rhythm, and in particular possess a most singular resemblance to some passages of Landor. But it is late ,<sup>1</sup> its relations to the verse *Alciphron* are not very certainly unravelled ,<sup>2</sup> and, excellent as his general prose-writing is, Moore belongs, as a whole, to the standard class. Of Landor we must, of course, speak at great length. he belongs to the definite group of the new

<sup>1</sup> The Prefatory "Letter" is indeed dated "Cairo, June 19, 1800," but of course this (written in character) is merely one of the literary *supercherries* fashionable at the time. He appears actually to have begun the subject, as a poem, twenty years later, July 25, 1820 , but found a difficulty in "managing the minor details of a story so as to be clear without growing prosaic," dropped it, and started it again in prose. It was not published till 1827.

<sup>2</sup> I mean that we do not know whether this, not published till twelve years later still (1839), consists of some or all of the original verse of 1820 , or whether other passages of the prose, now found in *The Epicurean*, were originally written in verse.

prose-men But, before coming to them, a few specimens of Moore and Coleridge must be given, and Moore himself must be dealt with first

Moore's ornate prose is, in fact, curiously transitional, more so indeed than Shelley's At one moment it is as of a slightly more imaged Burke, at another it reminds you of De Quincey or Landor For instance, the admirable image which I have italicised in the following (I dare say some one knows where he got it, but I don't) does not remove the general late-eighteenth-century character of the passage

But, even in sleep, the same faces continued to haunt me, and a dream, so distinct and vivid as to leave behind it the impression of reality, thus presented itself to my mind I found myself suddenly transported to a wide and desolate plain, where nothing appeared to breathe, or move, or live *The very sky that hung above it looked pale and extinct, giving the idea, not of darkness, but of light that had become dead*, and had that whole region been the remains of some older world left broken up and sunless, it could not have presented an aspect more quenched and desolate

That is good, but as a composition, as a symphony, it has too much of the old pendulum swing—the rhythm does not *progress* or gyrate This is somewhat better

When I sailed from Alexandria, the inundation of the Nile was at its full The whole valley of Egypt lay covered with its flood, and as, looking around me in the light of the setting sun, I saw shrines, palaces, and monuments encircled by the waters, I could almost fancy that I beheld the sinking island of Atlantis on the last evening its temples were visible above the wave

Here the progression is better, and there is less mere see-saw, but the individual feet, though separable without much difficulty, do not mark themselves sufficiently, the prose is still mainly *sectional*

Best of all, I think, is this—where the rhythm, while not transgressing into the poetical, is both much more marked and much more symphonic

Nothing | was ever | so bleak | and saddening | as the appearance | of this lake | The usual | ornaments | of the waters | of

Ēgypt | were not | want̃ng to it̃, | the tall | lotus | here | upl̃ft̃d |  
 her silṽry | flow̃rs, | and the crim̃son | flam̃go | float̃d | over the  
 tide | But they look̃d not | the sam̃e | as̃ in the world | ab̃ove | the  
 flower | had exch̃ng̃d | its whiteñss | for̃ a liṽd | hue, | and the  
 wings | of the bird | hung heaṽy | and colour̃less, | eṽryth̃ng |  
 wore | the sam̃e | half liṽng | aspect, | and the only | sound̃s | that  
 disturb̃d | the mourñful | still̃ness | were the wail̃ng cry | of a heron |  
 among the sedg̃es | and that diñ | of the fall̃ng | waters | in their  
 mid̃way | struggl̃e | ab̃ove

Here at last the writer has got into the new region, though he may carry about him some traces of the old.<sup>1</sup> But into that region had already burst, though the records of the feat long remained unknown, a greater than Moore

It is most curious, even if it can hardly be called surprising, to see, as we turn over the leaves of Mr Ernest Coleridge's pious and most welcome recoveries, how the attempt to portray natural beauty exactly, to "count the streaks of the tulip" and assort the colours of the sky-value, which had been so long forbidden even to the poet, requires and brings with it, when the prose-writer essays the task, an immediate reinforcement to sound as well as to sight. Still in the eighteenth century, somewhere between November 1799 and July 1800, we find this entry (an entire one)<sup>2</sup>

Leaves | of trees | upturñd | by the stir̃ng | wind | in twil̃ght—|  
 añ image | of pal̃ness, | wan | affright

Now I hope no one will be so thoughtless as to ejaculate, "Oh! Coleridge was always thinking of these effects for his verse, that is just a note for poetry." But

<sup>1</sup> The strong infusion of Ionic *a minore* (∪ ∪ —) or third pæon (∪ ∪ ∪) may here, as so often elsewhere, be noticed. It is one of the not very numerous footholds that we get in half wading, half swimming through this doubtful region.

<sup>2</sup> *Anima Poetæ*, p. 10

it is *not* verse,<sup>1</sup> and whether it is poetry or not depends upon a quarrel which is not at the moment ours. It is perfectly genuine prose rhythm, not verse at all. But it is prose rhythm of something like the highest quality. One little point, the omission of the copula and the use of a kind of apposition at "paleness, wan affright," is something that you will find practically never in Augustan prose, constantly in the nineteenth century, and it gives a rhythmical heightening of the most definite and peculiar kind. On December 19, 1800, he writes <sup>2</sup>

The thin | scattered | rain-clouds | were scudding | along the  
sky | above them | with a visible | interspace, | the crescent | moon |  
hung | and partook not | of the motion, | her own | hazy | light |  
filled up | the concave | as if | it had been painted | and the  
colours | had run

Here "partook not of the motion" is older-fashioned, *in diction*, but the rest is new, and all is so in the rhythm. And this, let it be remembered, is more than twenty years before the deliberate colour-and-rhythm school announces itself with De Quincey and Wilson and Landor, more than forty before a certain "Graduate of Oxford" wrote

And so, after all but a century's waiting, Coleridge's position as psychagogue is vindicated in prose, as it has been from the first in poetry and in criticism.

But we cannot leave the vindication at this point, especially as, though more than a decade and a half has passed since the documents were published, I at least have never seen much notice taken of them. Astonishingly Ruskinian, even to the point of frequent but cunningly carried-off intermixture of blank verse, is the following <sup>3</sup>

Ä drizzling rain | Heavy | masses | of shapeless | vapour | upon

<sup>1</sup> "In twi|light an im|age of pale|ness" 25. But—as one has so constantly, but always victoriously, to retort—the precedent and subsequent clauses entirely preclude such arrangement for the whole, even of this short piece.

<sup>2</sup> *Anima Poetae*, p. 12

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* p. 34. Dated October 21, 1803

the mountains | O' | the perpetual | forms | of Borrowdale, | yet it  
 is no | unbroken | tale | of dull | sadness | Slanting | pillars | travel  
 across the lake | at long | intervals, | the vaporous | mass | whitens |  
 in large | stains | of light, | on the lakeward | ridge | of that huge |  
 arm-chair | of Lodore | fell | a gleam | of softest | light, | that  
 brought out | the rich hues | of the late | autumn | The woody |  
 Castle | Crag | between me | and Lodore | is a rich | flower garden |  
 of colours— | the brightest | yellows | with the deepest | crimsons |  
 and the infinite | shades | of brown | and green, | the infinite |  
 diversity | of which | blends | the whole, | so that the brighter |  
 colours | seem | to be colours | upon a ground, | not coloured |  
 things | Little | woolpacks | of white | bright | vapour | rest | on  
 different | summits | and declivities | The vale | is narrowed | by  
 the mist | and cloud, | yet through | the wall | of mist | you can  
 see | into a bower | of sunny | light | in Borrowdale, | the birds |  
 are singing | in the tender | rain | as if | it were the rain | of April,  
 and the decaying | foliage | were flowers | and blossoms | The  
 pillar | of smoke | from the chimney | rises | in the mist, | and is  
 just | distinguishable | from it, | and the mountain | forms | in the  
 gorge | of Borrowdale | consubstantiate | with the mist | and cloud,  
 even | as the pillar'd | smoke— | a shade | deeper | and a deter|minate  
 form

Here, of course, you can separate, if you choose, not a few iambic decasyllables

O' the perpetual forms of Borrowdale—  
 The vale is narrowed by the mist and cloud—  
 The birds are singing in the tender rain—

perhaps one or two more But they do not, *in their context*, force themselves on the ear in any unpleasant sing-song, and they easily join with what comes before, or what comes after, in definite prose groups On the other hand, the word-values are arranged with evident cunning



There are many trochees, ditrochees, and even larger groups, in which the vowel-music is most carefully contrasted ("slanting pillars," "brightest yellows," "deepest crimsons"), and the sharp repetition—commonest of tricks now, but a rare and very dubious licence then!—of "*white bright vapour*" is noticeable. In "the brightest | yellows | with the deepest | crimsons" (amphibrach, trochee, third pæon, trochee), I almost dare to say we glimpse one of our panthers, a common-form prose combination corresponding to a verse. Note, too, the familiar-unfamiliar word "woolpacks," the parts of which might have no sense at all—it is so perfectly expressive, in sound, of what it means. There are some, of course, who will quarrel with "consubstantiate" and "determinate." Not I, for there has been so much appeal to the pure sense that this intellectual vocabulary comes as an agreeable set-off, and the objection of homœoteleuton, which might otherwise be sustainable, is to be met by the answer that good pronouncers do not make a rhyme *here*, the *a* being fully sounded in the verb and slightly slurred in the adjective.

On the other hand, if any one would like a contrast passage where the observation and the reflection have got the better of the prose-making, he will find it at p 112<sup>1</sup>. But he will also find many (I subjoin some references)<sup>2</sup> where science has not defeated or defrauded art. And one I must give at length, because it seems to show that, as indeed we might expect, his beloved and rather overextolled Jeremy Taylor was sometimes in S T C's mind when he wrote thus. Sometimes—for in the passage previously given I hear little of Jeremy

The love | of Nature | is ever | returned | double to us, | not  
only | [as ?]<sup>3</sup> the delight | in our delight, | but by linking | our

<sup>1</sup> The opening passage of chap. iv (January 15, 1805) dealing with such a tempting subject as the halo of the moon.

<sup>2</sup> Pages 18, 43, 184, 212.

<sup>3</sup> "As" is not in the original, but it—or something like it—seems to me necessary. It would not spoil the rhythm at all, but would simply extend the amphibrach before into a second pæon.

sweetest | but of themselves | perishable | feelings | to distinct |  
 and vivid | images | which we | ourselves | at times | and which a  
 thousand | casual | recollections | recall | to our memory | She | is  
 the preserver, | the treasurer, | of our joys | Even in sickness | and  
 nervous | diseases | she has peopled | our | imagination | with  
 lovely | forms | which have sometimes | overpowered | the inward |  
 pain | and brought with them | their old | sensations | And even |  
 when all men | have seemed | to desert us | and the friend | of our  
 heart | has passed on | with one glance | from his "cold | disliking eye," |  
*yet even then | the blue heaven | spreads itself out | and bends | over*  
*us, | and the little | tree | still | shelters us | under | its plumage | as*  
*a second | cope, | a domestic | firmament, | and the low | creeping |*  
*gale | will sigh | in the heath plant | and soothe us | by sound | of*  
*sympathy | till the lulled | grief | lose itself | in fixed | gaze | on the*  
*purple | heath blossom, | till the present | beauty | becomes | a*  
 vision | of memory |

That last sentence, at least the italicised portion, is Taylorian (adjusted to a nineteenth-century key, of course), or nothing. But elsewhere I can see no indebtedness, except of the most general kind, and an immense discovery or recovery. "Blessed is he who first sees the morning star," says Coleridge somewhere in this very book. Yea, and more blessed he who can not only see it, but catch and reproduce the flash of its light and the notes of its singing.

Now almost if not quite all these passages—those from Moore ~~as well~~ as those from Coleridge and those that we might (and may easily) add from Shelley—are, of course, description. I have not the slightest intention of ignoring or masking the fact, on the contrary, I have already drawn, do now once more draw, and may perhaps somewhat weary the reader by drawing, again and again in the future, his attention to it. There may be some fated and metaphysical connection between colour and

rhythm here there certainly is a pretty obvious one between the attentions devoted to the two kinds of form. And though we shall by no means find that this link is a fetter, that the more elaborate rhythmist in prose is, in the old Scots legal term, "thirled"—inevitably bound and restricted—to mere word-painting, we shall undoubtedly find that a very large proportion of his most successful and delightful achievements belong to this department. And, for yet other reasons than those given, it was natural that this should be so. Nothing had been more characteristic of the new poetry than its efforts and its successes in this way. Pitt's well-known remark on *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (a remark which might have been even better devoted to *The Ancient Mariner*), that he could have conceived of such effects as being reached by a painter, but not by a poet, is the *φήμη*, the chance but final expression and formulation, of the general sense on this head. When the new prose-makers took up the task of showing how near to verse prose could go, they naturally did it *in pari materia*.

To these, and especially to Coleridge, let all honour, therefore, be due, but there is nothing very wrong in the general opinion which assigns to De Quincey, Landor, and Wilson, chronologically speaking, if not also in other ways, the place of the First Three in the instauration of musical prose. To "place" them in respect of exact date and possible-probable originality would be the task of a thesis-writer. Let us only here remind the reader—who may take no further notice of the facts or work them out, just as he pleases—that Wilson and De Quincey were friends at the Lakes and in Edinburgh<sup>1</sup> very early—as early at least as 1814, that the latter had been, seven years earlier, under Coleridge's influence, that *Blackwood*, in which both wrote, appeared first three years later (1817), but did not for some time display the new style, that the *Confessions of an Opium Eater* appeared in the *London* in 1821, and the first volumes of the

<sup>1</sup> They had been contemporaries at Oxford, but had not there known each other.

*Imaginary Conversations* three years later again (1824) Landor, though intimate with Southey, had little to do with the other Lakers, or with his "mono-Gebirist"<sup>1</sup> admirer De Quincey, and he was, in fact, out of England entirely, or almost entirely, from 1811 to 1832. His development must have been independent, as was probably also De Quincey's own—except for the all-impregnating influence of "S T C." Wilson may have taken more directly from De Quincey himself. But, on the whole, it is best, as always, to regard them as mouthpieces, each in his own sufficiently individual and original way, of a tendency of the time—as setting sails of their own cut, and steering their own course, under the influence of the same Time-Spirit.

I do not, however, see any reason for depriving De Quincey of seniority, if not seignioralty in a certain sense. Since the late Mr. Henley thought fit to attack him, he has perhaps lost something, with *les jeunes*, of the favour which he used specially to possess with them. But, as every one who really knew Henley is well aware, his "black beasts" were chameleonic creatures, who took their colour from accidents and circumstances, rather than from anything essential to themselves. And I have even recently seen De Quincey described as "decadent," which ought to be a passport to fresh favour nowadays.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, there can be absolutely no chance of making any solid fight against his claim to be a great and a very early master of our later rhythmized prose. The *Susperia* have no need of apology or argument: their powers are self-validating to all competent and serious appreciation. Moreover, it is not in De Quincey's case, as it is in some others, uncertain whether the achievement was, or was not, unconscious and more or less accidental. De Quincey, as

<sup>1</sup> De Quincey's characteristic way of summing up his own alleged belief that he was the only person who read *Gebir* at its appearance. The term is open to cavil from the point of view of verbal criticism.

<sup>2</sup> I have myself, I think, dealt pretty faithfully with his general faults and merits in an essay originally contributed to *Macmillan's Magazine*, and reprinted with *Essays in English Literature* (London, 1890, Third Edition, 1896). But I there said very little about this particular part of his genius.

is well known, gave himself up wholly and solely to prose, in a fashion so rare as to be almost unique. Not only did he almost wholly avoid verse, but I fancy that he did not care for it very much as verse<sup>1</sup>. The decision, and in fact the acrimony, of his views, on the vexed question of the connection of verse and poetry, must be well known to any one who knows him at all, his contempt of merely plain prose likewise. He exhausted even his great powers of ingenious scholasticism, and landed himself in hopeless contradictions, by trying to construct a sort of *super-rhetoric* (different from eloquence) which should be the perfection of deliberate artistry in writing.

But he certainly recked his own rede. How early the wonderful harmonies, which he never gave to the public till he was actually "at the middle of the road of our life," came into his ears it is impossible to say, and quite idle to attempt to see amid the luminous haze, but essentially hazy luminosity, of his own statements. If it was at Oxford, why, then, the place fitted the time and the man, as too seldom happens. But we shall disregard all this, and simply analyse the famous passages, hackneyed as they are, or ought to be. Some of these divisions and quantifications are, as far as I am concerned, at least thirty years old, and I think a good deal older, and, though something like them may have been tried by others in the interval, I do not know it.

One single sentence, which I have used constantly as a perfect type in miniature of rhythmized prose, may serve as a beginning

And her eyes | if they were e|ver seen | would be nei|ther sweet |  
nor subtle, | no man | could read | their story, | they would be  
found | filled | with perishing | dreams | and with wrecks | of  
forgotten | delirium<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare the curious passage cited *inf* and almost any of his criticisms of poets, especially the (generally not unsympathetic) "Shelley" and the almost ludicrously inadequate "Keats."

<sup>2</sup> If anybody prefers it, either from Stevenson's dislike of split words or for another reason, I should have no violent objection to "if they were

Nothing—not more than fifty years' familiarity with its text, and thirty with its analysis, not even all but a couple of decades of such *not* endearing use<sup>1</sup> as may be made in lectures and tutorials—has lessened, and therefore I think I may say that nothing is ever likely to lessen, the charm of this phrase to me, or its infinite variety of appeal. Short as it is, it is a kind of magazine of the secrets of its kind. In the first place, it illustrates, supereminently, that doctrine of Variety itself which has been, and must be, so often impressed. At first hearing, a hasty ear might prompt the kindred tongue to say, "Oh! but that is 'emmetric'! it breaks the primal law!"<sup>2</sup> Examine it, and you will find nothing of the kind. There is not so much as a blank verse in it, even of the cunningly masked kind which has been noticed in Coleridge and others, and will be noticed in Ruskin and others still. There are, indeed, *fragments* of blank verse—

No man | could read | their story—  
Found filled | with perish|ing dreams |—

which would fit themselves, with Shakspearian ease, to complete contexts in the metre. But this is just what De Quincey avoids. The sections which precede and follow them suggest quite different rhythms, and yet blend with them harmoniously according to the law of prose harmony.

Again, note the absence of the non-metrical correspondence which we have detected as one great note of Augustan prose and its immediate successors. The sections *are* sections, but they are not broken into couples and batches, they serpentine on continuously. Then, too, the conclusions tell the same tale. "Nor subtle,"

---

ever | seen" | (dochmiac and monosyllable instead of pæon and iamb), or to "would be neither | sweet" | (pæon and monosyllable instead of anapæst and iamb). But I think the scansion in text runs better, and, as I have said, word splitting has no terrors for me, though I believe rather less in it than I used to do for *prose* scansion, while I am more convinced than ever of its desirableness in verse.

<sup>1</sup> *Usus concinnat amorem* very often, no doubt, but hardly *this* use.

<sup>2</sup> *V sup p i*

an amphibrach with the amphibrach's trochaic close-suggestion "Their story," the same But "delirium" lengthens this out to a pæon, and so at once varies and completes the sound effect Nor are the "beautiful syllables," the "beautiful letters," found wanting There are no "strange" words, unless "delirium" be called so the vocabulary is quite ordinary, but the vowel music, assisted and qualified by the consonants and the word lengths, is unerring "Sweet," "nor," "subtle", "man," "read," "story", "*perishing dreams*," "*wrecks of forgotten delirium*,"—in all these the marvellous power of contrast, grouped and united under the general rhythm of the sentence, is displayed And when you have appreciated the details you have only to read the passage again as a whole, and rejoice once more, undisturbed by analysis or anatomy, in its total result as entire and perfect

In the very next sentence<sup>1</sup> there is an awful example of the uncertainty of De Quincey's self-criticism For he speaks of Our Lady of Sighs as having a "*dilapidated turban*" Grant that perhaps, ninety years ago, "dilapidated" had not got into its present state of half-comic vulgarising But at any time it would have been the wrong word for "turban", though no doubt some idea of the towered crown of Cybele (which he was afterwards to use deliberately and admirably in regard to the third sister) may have originated and (as a conception, though not as a phrase) excused it

I have said that De Quincey's greatest passages are all, more or less, hackneyed, but we certainly can exercise selection upon them here The famous "Bishop of Beauvais!" peroration of the *Joan of Arc* he might himself have called "rhetoric" or "eloquence" in different moods or phases of his juggling fits with those terms, but be it either, it has little for us It is noisy, and *blares*—which rhythmical prose should never do, though verse sometimes may The moment that one note in prose so overpowers the next that you cannot attend to it, the

<sup>1</sup> The passage, of course, comes from the description of the second of "Our Ladies of Sorrow," *Mater Suspiriorum*

error of oratorical style, and the Augustan system, returns So, too, by no means very much in the equally famous *Mail Coach* (except the *Dream-Fugue* itself) comes up to our standard The most perfect example, I think, is before the bravura part begins

Moonlight | and the first | timid | tremblings | of the dawn | were  
by this time | blending, | and the blendings | were brought | into a  
still | more exquisite | state | of unity | by a slight | silvery | mist, |  
motionless | and dreamy, | that covered | the woods | and fields |  
but with a veil | of equable | transparency<sup>1</sup>

Some longer passages from the *Dream-Fugue* itself must be analysed presently, for it is from this and from the *Suspiria* (by no means so much from the original or even the supplemented *Confessions*) that De Quincey's triumphs in our way come

Indeed the total bulk of such passages is by no means so large as an oblivious, or perhaps originally not very industrious, reader (inferring from the constant reference to the author in this particular capacity) may think The greater part by far—something like ninety-five per cent I should say—of De Quincey's voluminous compositions are written in the "standard" variety—observing great precision, and achieving remarkably constant success, wherever he does not digress, or rather divagate, into one of his fits of rigmarole and horse-play His longest, most elaborate, and most ambitious Essays, such as that on *The Cæsars*, are entirely written in this style, and even the justly famous passage where he elaborates the dreadful inevitableness of Roman tyranny suggested by Gibbon, has hardly more—perhaps indeed a good deal less—accompaniment of positive rhythm than Gibbon would

<sup>1</sup> Another excellent example of the way in which positive *metre* is made in prose to yield its legitimate, and withhold its illegitimate influence, may be taken from the opening here "Moonlight and the first," "tremblings of the dawn," are metrically identical, but "timid" between them staves off any combined metrical effect, and switches the course of the rhythm into due prose run



have given<sup>1</sup> He does, to some extent, in his own work, honestly carry out the sound artistic doctrine somewhat inconsistently expounded in his *Rhetoric* Essay, that ornament should never be super-added, that it should grow naturally out of, or with, the development of the subject It is true that, with his almost uncurbed discursiveness, such development may at any moment take any turn, but it is by no means often that he allows it to take this one On the contrary, he is not seldom almost as oratorical as Bolingbroke

It has, I have no doubt, occurred to other students of elaborate rhythmical prose that curiously large proportions of the most famous examples of it are concerned with dreams, and I should not suppose that many of them have failed to anticipate the following suggestion of the reason Dreams themselves are nothing if not rhythmical, their singular fashion of progression (it is matter of commonest remark) floats the dreamer over the most irrational and impossible transitions and junctures (or rather breaches) of incident and subject, without jolt or jar They thus combine—of their own nature and to the invariable experience of those who are fortunate enough to have much to do with them—the greatest possible *variety* with the least possible *disturbance* Now this combination, as we have been faithfully putting forth, ~~is~~ the very soul—the quintessence, the constituting form and idea—of harmonious prose Unfortunately it is not every one who has the faculty of producing this combination in words, fortunately there are some who have We noticed how the dream-subject presented itself in Moore, we are seeing how it is almost indissolubly connected with De Quincey's greatest performances, it will be found to be the same with Landor, with Kingsley, with others And, by a curious and convincing conversion, we shall further discover that in certain great passages of Ruskin, of Pater, and of yet others, which are not directly

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting, to his credit, that De Quincey, who follows Coleridge so often (the "*Rhetoric v Eloquence*" thimble rigging itself seems to have come from one of the innumerable sports of the Estesian brain), does *not* follow him in the depreciation of Gibbon's style

connected with actual dreams in subject, the dream-character impresses itself, all the same, on their style

By combining the words "dream" and "fugue" in one instance, and by using the latter term not infrequently in his critical and preceptist remarks upon the matter, De Quincey has shown how thorough was his mastery of the subject in theory as well as in practice. For the fugue in the same way, as opposed to the tune, requires, I am told, large variety with easy transition. But the fugue part of the matter applies chiefly to the subject, and to the general rhythmical, however intricate, connection. Except in such uses of the same word as we traced in Hooker and others, I doubt whether you can find much<sup>1</sup> recurrence of similar rhythmical motives of any bulk in English prose, unless identical in actual wording, like De Quincey's own *Consul Romanus*. But the qualities of pure sound that remain to be analysed and marshalled, the variety, the transition, by undulation and slide instead of by breakage and jar, or at least severance and stop, and lastly the all-embracing progression of rhythm—these, though are by no means wholly independent of the subject, are not primarily derived from it in origin, and can be separated from it in result.

In the first long instance we shall take<sup>2</sup> there is a certain peculiarity. This elaborate prose, for reasons not very recondite, does not often take to the lighter vein. In connection with what has just been said, it may be noticed that dreams themselves are almost always serious: the most pyramidally comic things occur in them, but never present themselves lightly<sup>3</sup>. De Quincey, however, has at least one passage which is not mere horseplay, though it contains something of this comic enormity of fact, and which is beautifully rhythmical. To a very green modern taste it may be spoilt by the "sensibility"

<sup>1</sup> I must emphasise "much". I have endeavoured occasionally to indicate wider recurrences of foot and group motive, and I dare say any one who follows me will find more.

<sup>2</sup> From the earlier part of *The English Mail Coach*—not the *Vision of Sudden Death*, or the *Dream Fugue* founded on it.

<sup>3</sup> You wake laughing at them, but you laugh at them because you wake

or "sentimentality" which came up first in France in the Grand Monarch's time, was made European by Sterne and caricatured by Mackenzie and the Germans, which is flagrant (or diluvial) in Landor himself, and which was finally turned out by Heine and Thackeray. But this hardly affects the form. For the solution of the "crocodile" the reader must go to the context. It is in its origin one of the worst of De Quincey's "rignmarole" foolings, but he subdues it, as a dream-motive, not unworthily.

Out | of the darkness, | if I happen | to call back | the image | of  
 Fanny, | uprises | suddenly | from a gulf | of forty | years | a rose |  
 in June, | or if I think | for a moment | of the rose | in June, |  
 uprises | the heavenly | face | of Fanny | One | after the other, |  
 like | the antiphonies | in the choral | service, | rise | Fanny | and  
 the rose in June, | then | back again | the rose in June | and Fanny |  
 Then come | both | together, | as in a chorus, | roses | and  
 Fannies, | Fannies | and roses, | without end, | thick | as blossoms |  
 in Paradise | Then comes | a venerable | crocodile | in a royal |  
 livery | of scarlet | and gold | with sixteen | capes, | and the  
 crocodile | is driving | four-in-hand | from the box | of the Bath |  
 mail | And suddenly | we | upon the mail | are pulled up | by a  
 mighty | dial | sculptured | with the hours | that mingle | with the  
 heavens | and the heavenly | host | Then | all at once | we are  
 arrived | at Marlborough | Forest, | amongst the lovely | house-  
 holds | of the roe deer, | the deer | and their fawns | retire | into  
 the dewy | thickets, | the thickets | are rich | with roses, | once  
 again | the roses | call up | the sweet | countenance | of Fanny, |  
 and she, | being | the granddaughter | of a crocodile, | awakens | a  
 dreadful | legendary | host | of semi-legendary | animals — |  
 griffins, | dragons, | basilisks, | sphinxes — | till at length | the whole |  
 vision | of fighting | images | crowds | into one | towering |

armorial | shield, | a vast | emblazonry | of human | charities | and  
human | loveliness | that have perished, | but quartered | heraldic-  
ally | with | unutterable | and demoniac | natures, | whilst over all |  
rises, | as a surmounting | crest, | one | fair | female | hand | with the  
forefinger | pointing, | in sweet | sorrowful | admonition, | upwards |  
to heaven, | where is sculptured | the eternal | writing | which pro  
claims | the frailty | of earth | and her children

Here, not only is the composition, both in dream and description, extremely well done, but the rhythmical setting is consummate and almost unique. Only that ever unlucky word "female" jars seriously, though he had doubtless better have avoided the too close juxtaposition of "chorus" and "choral". The always-to-be-wanted-and-welcomed variety is present in quite extraordinary measure, and the truth of the Dionysian doctrine has hardly ever been better demonstrated than in the bold use of

Roses and Fannies,  
Fannies and roses,

which, from the difference of the supporting clauses on each side, and the possibility of treating each apparently dactylic-trochaic syzygy as differently arranged in itself, does not violate the conditions of prose harmony in the least.

The skill with which a "blank"—

Amongst the lovely households of the deer—

is avoided by the specification of "roe" is notable, the clause-items that follow are all harmonious in themselves, and all harmonise together, and the more pedestrian and oratorical close—warranted in these conditions by the contrasting seriousness of the sense—has still something that differentiates it from the usual eighteenth-century tone of even the best similar passages earlier<sup>1</sup>.

The *Dream-Fugue*, with its motive of tragedy just

<sup>1</sup> This passage is also a very good exploring ground for definite foot and foot group motives.

averted, is naturally of a different tone and texture from this, and it sometimes comes near the loadstone-rock of bombast. But it seldom actually touches that rock, nor ever clings to it, and the mastery of the rhythming is really wonderful. I should like, if I thought the reader would stand it, to scan the whole of the eleven pages as a pendant to the Browne *magnum*, and I rather think that a considerable portion ought to be given. But some general remarks must in any case be afforded. The special thing, noticeable once more, is the extraordinary dexterity with which improper metrification is avoided. I suppose in the overture ("to be given *tumultuosissimamente*") he designedly overstepped, or at least trespassed on, the line, and accordingly it seems to me much the worst part of the whole. But elsewhere that touch which we have observed above—the *unmetring* by insertion or omission as well as by juxtaposition of contrasted rhythm—is omnipresent, as well as the sleight of pause or emphasis which prevents a blank or other verse line from offending the ear by completed metre, though the incomplete suggestion contributes to the general harmony.

The second passage of this fugue—that of the frigate and line-of-battle ship,—and still more the fourth—the chariot-race with the news of Waterloo through the Minster and its Campo Santo—are the longest and most sustained *tours de force* of this remarkable composition, and (except that the *tumultuosissimamente* is perhaps rather too much present throughout) they are astonishingly successful as diploma-pieces. But for exhibition of the quieter but intenser magic of the style, they must, I think, yield to not a few sentences, and even paragraphs, from the *Suspiria*, besides that magnificent one already quoted and analysed. Browne himself might have written some of those which follow, and I do not know that they are any the worse for not having been more fully worked up.

Like God, | whose servants | they are, | they utter | their pleasure |  
not by sounds | that perish | or by words | that go astray, | but by

signs | in Heaven, | by changes | on Earth, | by pulses | on  
secret | rivers, | heraldries | painted | on darkness, | and hiero|glyphics |  
written | on the tablets | of the brain

This is quite quiet, but it is quietly consummate. Let anybody duly consider the little causes of the rhythm, the contrasted structure of the members, the appearance, after no epithet for "heaven" or "earth," of "secret" before "rivers", the fourfold repetition of "by" and its sudden dropping at "heraldries", the procession in bulk of "heraldries" and "hieroglyphics"—the dactyl to the dochmiac—and of the simple trochee "darkness" to the pæon *plus* anapæst of "on the tablets of the brain", and he will find that they are scarcely fortuitous.

The often dwelt-on sentence may be the finest, but the three sisters are not so unequally parted, despite the touches of *sensiblerie* with their almost invariable, and very curious, vulgarising of rhythmical effect.

The eldest | of the three | is named | *Mater Lachrymarum*,— |  
Our Lady | of Tears | She it is | that night and day | raves | and  
moans, | calling | for vanished | faces | She stood | in Rama, | when  
a voice | was heard | of lamentation— | Rachel | weeping | for her  
children | and refusing | to be comforted | She it was | that stood |  
in Bethlehem | on the night | when Herod's | sword | swept | its  
nurseries | of innocents, | and the little | feet | were stiffened | for  
ever, *which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead,  
woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in  
Heaven*<sup>1</sup>

Her eyes | are sweet | and subtle, | wild and sleepy, | by turns  
oftentimes | rising | to the clouds, | oftentimes | challenging | the  
heavens | She wears | a diadem | round | her head | And I  
knew | by childish | memories | that she could go | abroad | upon

<sup>1</sup> If only he had stopped at "ever"<sup>1</sup> or had compressed the following gush into "so often heard tottering overhead" after "feet"

thē winds | when shē heard | thē sobbing | of litanies, | or thē  
thundering | of organs, | and when shē beheld | thē mustering | of  
summer | clouds <sup>1</sup>

But then it goes off into ordinary stuff about blind beggars and their daughters, while the reader will have already noticed how hurtfully superfluous is the earlier italicised passage. But the remainder is admirable. The rhythm is mainly *undulatory*—a common but by no means universal mode—and great play is made by lengthening or shortening of clause-ends—"tears," "faces," "comforted", "litanies," "organs," "clouds"

The second sister, our Lady of Sighs, who is the Sibylla Palmifera of the great sentence, has not only nothing else so palmary in her description, but nothing of the absolutely first class. But, on the contrary, the third has an entire paragraph, all but an entire page, which is, for rhythmical *maestria*, hardly inferior to anything of the same length in our literature.

But thē third | sister, | who is also | thē youngest |  
Hush | whisper | while wē talk | of hēr | Hēr kingdom | is not |  
large, | or else | no flesh | could live, | but within | that kingdom |  
all power | is hēr | Hēr head, | turreted | like that | of Cybēlē, |  
rises | almost | beyond | thē reach | of sight | Shē droops not, |  
and hēr eves, | rising | so high, | might bē hidden | by distance |  
But being | what they are, | they cannot | bē hidden, | through thē  
treble | veil | of crape | that shē wears, | thē fierce | light | of a  
blazing | misery | that rests not | for matins | or vespers, | for noon |  
of day | or noon | of night, | for ebbing | or for flowing | tide, |  
may bē read | from thē very | ground | Shē | is thē defier | of  
God | Shē also | is thē mother | of lunacies, | and thē suggestress |

<sup>1</sup> Few better examples of the *diminuendo* can be found than this dochmiac, pæon, amphibrach, monosyllable—five, four, three, one. A dissyllabic foot might be inserted, but is rendered unnecessary to some extent by what has been often noticed—the trochaic *suggestion* of the amphibrach.

of suicides | Deep | lie the roots | of her power, | but narrow | is  
 the nation | that she rules | For she | can approach | only | those |  
 in whom | a profound | nature | has been upheaved | by central |  
 convulsions, | in whom | the heart | trembles and | the brain | rocks |  
 under | conspiracies | of tempest | from without, | and tempest |  
 from within | Madonna | moves | with uncertain | steps, | fast | or  
 slow, | but still | with tragic | grace | Our Lady | of Sighs |  
 creeps | timidly | and stealthily | But this youngest | sister | moves  
 with | incalculable | motions, | bounding | and [as ?] with a tiger's |  
 leaps | She carries | no key, | for, though coming | rarely |  
 among men, | she storms | all doors | at which | she is permitted | to  
 enter | at all | And her name | is *Mater* | *Tenebrarum*— | Our  
 Lady | of Darkness

There is here hardly a fault in rhythm or sound, if there be any they are very small. Some might prefer "concealed," "obscured," "masked" even, for the first "hidden," and "earthquake" or some other word for the first "tempest." "*As* with" might be a little better than "*and* with." But this is nothing. One dominant of the rhythm is certainly from our point of view<sup>1</sup> Ionic *a minore*, or its double, third pæon. "But the third sis-", "who is also", "and her eyes, ris|ing so high, might", "or for vespers", "or for flowing", "the defier", "is the nation", and so on. But the actual feet are kept apart (only once come two together), and the syllable that intervenes ("sis-ter") between the first two occurrences just breaks the metre while suggesting the rhythm in the due prose style. Once you can make a blank, but otherwise complete, octosyllabic distich—

For noon of day, or noon of night,  
 For ebbing or for flowing tide,

---

<sup>1</sup> I have not "given a handle" by opening the scansion anapæstically. This is necessitated by "sis-ter." But the cross scansion or "counterpointing" of sections is even more important in prose than in verse "prosody."



and once or twice also <sup>1</sup> something like a blank decasyllable But in prose you would never read either that way, it falls naturally as divided above, and so, once more, breaks metre while keeping rhythm, and allowing a sort of *aura* of metre itself to remain And the Ionics scarcely do more than rise now and then, like bubbles in mineral spring-water, through the varied yet always harmonically adjusted foot-combinations I do not believe that the piece can be beaten, as a concerted piece, from the purely artistic-rhythmical point of view, though of course you might raise any amount of cavil at it from others

Some, not merely of "the general" have a preference, I believe, for the opening of *Savannah-la-Mar* It is fine, but seems to me to infringe, more than that last quoted, on poetic diction-arrangement, and therefore, beautiful as it is, to be slightly inferior But it shall be duly scanned and given

God smote | Savannah-la-Mar, | and in one night | removed her, |  
with all | her towers | standing | and population | sleeping, | from  
the steadfast | foundations | of the shore | to the coral | floors | of  
ocean | And God said, | "Pompeii | did I bury | and conceal | from  
men | through seventeen | centuries, | this city | I will bury, | but  
not conceal | She shall be | a monument | to men | of my |  
mysterious | anger, | set | in azure | light | through generations | to  
come, | for I will | enshrine her | in a crystal | dome | of my tropic |  
seas | This city, | therefore, | like a mighty | galleon | with all | her  
apparel | mounted, | streamers flying, | and tackling | perfect, | seems  
floating | upon the noiseless | depths | of ocean, | and oftentimes |  
in glassy | calms, | through the translucent | atmosphere | of water |  
that now | stretches | like an air-woven | awning | above | the silent  
encampment, | mariners | from every | clime | look down | into her  
courts | and her palaces, | count her gates, | and number | the spires |

<sup>1</sup> "Her kingdom is not large or else no flesh  
Could live."

of her churches    She is one | ample | cemetery, | and has been |  
 many | a year | But in the mighty | calms | that brood | for weeks |  
 over tropic | latitudes | she fascinates | the eye | with a Fata |  
 Morgana | revelation | as of human | life | still | subsisting | in  
 submarine | asylums, | sacred | from the storms | that torment | our  
 upper air |

There are a few, but not many, or very striking, attempts in the same vein scattered among the earlier chapters of the *Autobiography*, but the greater part of that interesting (if most labyrinthine) rigmarole is written in simple narrative fashion. It contains, however, one curious passage, which is not without bearing on De Quincey's general practice in elaborate prose—a passage in which, while frankly acknowledging doubts whether his natural vocation lay towards poetry, he continues “Well indeed I knew, and I know, that had I chosen to enlist among the *sor-disant* poets of the day—amongst those, I mean, who, by mere force of talent and mimetic skill, contrive to sustain the part of a poet, in a scenical sense and with a scenical effect—I also could have won such laurels as are gained by such merit,” with more to the same effect, covered indeed by Wordsworthian pretexts about spontaneity and the like, but simply amounting to the “sour grapes,” the “I could an I would,” etc., which De Quincey's own relentless psychology would have been the first to unmask in another person. Enough has been given to vindicate his true position, and it may be repeated, with no unfairness, that in his case what might (but I think never would) have made fair, and more than fair, poetry in another, was diverted to make not many but great, and on the whole original, examples of rhymed prose.

And certainly it was well so, for we have generally had in England, thank Heaven! plenty of good poets, and do not want doubtful ones, while we had, in De Quincey's time, constant and pressing need of an instauration of ornate prose-writing. Whether he was actually

the man who "fished the murex up," or took the hint from that everlasting murex-finder, though not always murex-user, S T C, I have said that I do not know, that I do not believe it possible to be certain, and that I do not care. Between him and Landor the prize certainly lies, for though the connections between De Quincey and Wilson (still with a joint throw-back to Coleridge) were early and intimate, I do not think that "Christopher" was at all likely to be the discoverer. At any rate, in the examples given, and in others, we have what had practically been unknown in English since Thomas Burnet—the muse Polyhymnia busying herself once more with prose. She has been fairly busy ever since, and very busy, at increasing speeds, for the last seventy years, and again for the last forty. She has lately, after the unfortunate fashion of the day, turned her business into companies, with very limited individual liability, and the shareholders sometimes regard the early pioneers in the business, De Quincey perhaps more particularly, as not merely effete and rococo personages, but impudent interlopers, diverting the attention of the public from "us youth." Of these we may have briefly to reason now and again, *with* them, never. Here is a re-discovered art, a lamp dug out of a tomb, found burning, and used to rekindle other lamps long disused and unlit, a "British shell" (as poor Collins, putting immortal poetry in a mortal, and most deservedly mortal lingo, has it) which, catching from older examples the undying melody of the ocean, revives it for fresh sets of willing ears. Let anybody who will, cavil, let us bow the knee and hear<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If I have quoted and analysed nothing from the voluminous supplements to the older editions of De Quincey, published by Professor Masson (*Works of De Quincey*, 14 vols, 1889-90), Mr Hogg, *Uncollected Works of De Quincey* (2 vols, 1890), and Dr Japp, *Posthumous Works of De Quincey* (2 vols, 1891), it is from no want of original acquaintance with them at the time of their appearance, or failure to renew that acquaintance for this special purpose. They contain hardly anything suitable to it, except a pretty positive confirmation of what might be expected, in the absence from the additional fragments of the *Susperia* of anything like the elaboration of the completed work. Incidentally, the pieces in English hexameter—bad even of its bad kind—such as *Anna Louisa* (*Posthumous Works*, 1 94-99) show how essentially De Quincey was a master of prose rhythm, and of that only

The *Noctes Ambrosianae*, and the other works of their author, have, for many years, been so little popular, and the trend of modern criticism has been so much against Wilson, that I dare say I shall be found fault with for admitting him at all. But a critic who goes by popularity does not deserve to exist, and a person who, not going by popularity, cannot see Christopher North's great, though greatly flawed, merits may be a critic, but is himself a hopelessly flawed one. Whether he was a pupil or whether (for the *status pupillaris* is not one in which one can imagine Christopher, at least consciously, sojourning) he was merely a fellow-initiate with De Quincey, it is certain that the defects of the latter are greatly magnified and multiplied in him, and the merits much more fitfully present. A finer taste might have left some things of De Quincey's out altogether, and have omitted more from their actual places, but it is difficult to reconcile the existence of any taste at all with the mere writing—let alone the allocation—of many passages of Christopher. De Quincey cannot always sustain himself at the required height, but it is the exception when Wilson does not almost immediately drop from any point that he may have for a moment reached. De Quincey does, as a rule, recognise the great principle "Red ink for ornament, and black for use." Wilson splashes and blots his carmine about with the least, or with no, provocation. Yet I do not see how the following passage can be left out, though I shall not think it necessary to give another

There | it was, | on a little | river | island, | that once, | whether  
 sleeping | or waking | we know not, | we saw | celebrated | a  
 Fairy's | Funeral | First | we heard | small pipes | playing | as if  
 no bigger | than hollow | rushes | that whisper | to the night winds, |  
 and more piteous | than aught | that trills | from earthly | instrument |  
 was the scarce | audible | dirge | It seemed | to float | over the  
 stream, | every | foam bell | emitting | a plaintive | note, | till the  
 airy | anthem | came | floating | over our couch, | and then |

alighted | without | footsteps | among the heather | The pattering |  
 of little | feet | was then heard | as if living | creatures | were  
 arranging | themselves | in order, | and then | there was nothing |  
 but a more ordered | hymn | The harmony | was like the melting |  
 of musical | dewdrops, | and sang, | without | words, | of sorrow |  
 and death We opened | our eyes | or rather, | sight came to them |  
 when closed, | and dream | was vision | Hundreds | of creatures |  
 no taller | than the crest | of the lapwing, | and all | hanging down |  
 their veiled | heads, | stood | in a circle | on a green | plot | among  
 the rocks, | and in the midst | was a bier, | framed, | as it seemed, |  
 of flowers | unknown | among the Highland | hills, | and on the  
 bier | a Fairy | lying | with uncovered | face, | pale | as the lily, |  
 motionless | as the snow | The dirge | grew fainter | and fainter, |  
 and then | died quite away, | when two | of the creatures | came  
 from the circle | and took | their station, | one | at the head | and  
 the other | at the foot | of the bier | They sang | alternate |  
 measures, | not louder | than the twittering | of the awakened | wood-  
 lark | before | it goes | up the dewy | air, | but dolorous | and full of |  
 the desolation | of death | The flower bier | stirred, | for the spot |  
 on which it lay | sank | slowly | down, | and in a few | moments | the  
 greensward | was smooth | as ever— | the very dew | glittering |  
 above | the buried | Fairy | A cloud | passed over | the moon, |  
 and, with a choral | lament, | the funeral | troop | sailed | duskily |  
 away, | heard | afar off, | so still | was the midnight | solitude | of  
 the glen | Then | the disenthralled | Orchy | began | to rejoice | as  
 before | through all | her streams | and falls, | and, at the sudden |  
 leaping | of the waters | and outbursting | of the moon, | we awoke |

There are some obvious blemishes here The editorial  
 “we” jars throughout—the idea of a committee or com-  
 mission seeing dreams, sleeping in a sort of Great Bed of

Ware on the moors, and simultaneously opening their eyes, jeopardises the whole thing "Than aught that trills from earthly instrument" is not only blank verse,<sup>1</sup> not only poetic diction, but poetic *lingo* "Order" and "ordered," though probably a mere oversight, make an unlucky one One or two other knots may one find in the reed, but it is a reed for all that, and one of great smoothness and beauty, waving and flowering by its own river in no unlovely fashion, and capable of giving no unlovely sound When it is remembered that there are hundreds of passages like it (though more "knotty") scattered for thirty years in writings which had a much larger circulation than most of De Quincey's, and were collected long before his, the importance of Wilson as an influence and pattern will surely not require much more argument But it is part of our business to note that though this passage from the *Recreations* is continued in almost as high a key, the mode changes to something much more like the oratorical Burke, not Browne or Taylor, is once more the pattern<sup>2</sup> In fact, all these pioneers of polyphonic prose are apt, and naturally enough apt, to slip into the harangue, and in so doing to revert to the old alternation of antithesis and balance, instead of the continuous meander of true rhythmical prose that is not oratory

But probably the majority of readers at the present day, if they take any interest at all in this matter, will "think long" till they come to Landor For my own part, I should not, as I have already remarked, take much account of the comparative unpopularity of De Quincey, and the almost superlative unpopularity of Wilson, at this moment Times go wrong, and they go right again, and it is the business of the critic to correct if he can, and if not, to neglect, their aberration But there is not the slightest question (putting the mere present moment quite aside) as to Landor's eminence, earliness, and intrinsic interest in this respect Whatever controversy

<sup>1</sup> Salvable, however see scansion

<sup>2</sup> Please observe that this is said of the (not quoted) *continuation*, not of the passage itself

there may be about his critical and intellectual power, however abysmal may be the gulf between those who consider him a real and choice humourist, and those who discern in him only a ghastly *minus* quantity of the humorous, whether it is, or is not, blasphemy to call his tenderness the tenderness of a more refined Mr Tupman, and his high-breeding the deportment of a nobler Mr Turveydrop—the magnificence of his more than occasional phrase, and the beauty of his frequent concerted pieces of prose harmony, stand out of, and far above, all reasonable dispute. And with him, too, we have the intensely interesting addition of the fact that he was a poet, and no mean or minor poet either, whereas (as we have seen) De Quincey was not a poet at all, and (as it was unnecessary to say till this moment) Wilson, though he wrote a good deal of verse, was a minor poet almost to *minimty*. In fact, the conjunction had never been seen since Greville and Donne in the earlier seventeenth century, for in Browne and Taylor the poetic faculty was not much more prominent than in Wilson himself. Nay, since the revival of polyphony in prose, although the brocard that good poets are good prose writers has generally held,<sup>1</sup> practice in two harmonies, at full stretch of both, has been the exception rather than the rule. Among Landor's own contemporaries, Shelley, an exquisite prose writer, is, as we have seen, rather severe in his rhythm. Among his successors, Ruskin and Pater prove the rule in the other way—the one in his failure, the other in his abstinence. Swinburne and William Morris go, indeed, with Landor, but under restrictions, which we shall have to consider when we come to them.

Of Landor, however, it may be said that he was not only master *utriusque linguae*, but master of both, in a somewhat curious and a very interesting way. We never (as we so often do with poets as different as, for instance, Shelley and Dryden) feel that the prose writer, if he had been writing in verse, would have been vastly

<sup>1</sup> Even Nietzsche does not turn *this* valuation topsy turvy

more lavish, not merely of positive metre, as he was bound to be, and of poetic diction, as he was entitled to be, but of such rhythmical devices as are common to poetry and the most elaborate prose. Whether, in the poet, we sometimes feel that the *contubernium* of the prose-writer has slightly chilled and stiffened the poetry, is one of the innumerable controversial questions about Landor, but, fortunately, one which need merely be stated, not discussed or answered here. It is with the prose that we have to do, and I should not touch on the verse at all, if it were not the case that in no English writer known to me are prose and verse so close together, and that a study of the verse is almost necessary—is certainly very helpful—as a preliminary to the study of the prose. Its results need only be communicated here to the reader, in so far as they affect estimate of that prose itself.

His critical or preceptist deliverances on the subject of the relations of the two, and on ornate prose, are, however, necessary texts. Landor's "classicism" is tolerably common or neutral ground, and that it was classicism with a strong Romantic dash is ground on which it is scarcely necessary to walk with sword very loose in the sheath, and cloak ready at an instant to be rolled round the dagger arm. The unwary reader may be at first startled when he finds the declaration,<sup>1</sup> "No writer of florid prose was ever more than a secondary poet." But he should take in connection with it the much better known self-description, "Poetry was always my amusement, prose my study and business." He is probably with Chatham rather than with Chesterfield, when he makes the latter say that "cadence" is "trifling," and the former respond, "I am not sure that it is, for an orderly and sweet sentence, by gaining our ear,

<sup>1</sup> Almost all, but not all, the following extracts will be found in Sir Sidney Colvin's excellent "*Golden Treasury Selections*." I had made rather a special study of Forster's edition before those *Selections* appeared, and I have not failed to re-explore it. But Sir Sidney is as good as Jack Horner at plum pulling, and I think it will seldom be necessary to refer readers (unless they are wise enough to make the expedition of their own accord) to the recesses of that most Brobdingnagian or Gargantuan pie.



conciliates our affections" There are, scattered about the *Conversations*, many other expressions which, put as they are in the mouths of the most diverse speakers, are pretty certainly *authoritative* in a punning sense, not to mention that, though Landor thought himself "dramatic," and perhaps really tried to elude identifications in the vast masquerade of these *Conversations*, his own voice is never mistakable, whatever the cut of the mask or the colour of the domino from which it proceeds

Thus Archdeacon Hare, while promulgating the orthodox classical doctrine that proper words in proper places leave nothing to be desiderated, admits words "beyond what is requisite to express the meaning," if they are "peculiarly beautiful in themselves or strikingly harmonious," a frank or permit than which hardly anything more can be desired by the most florid or flamboyant colourist and tone-monger Diogenes may talk like Sprat,<sup>1</sup> and Barrow may advise us only to "say things plainly", but both speak in character and *ad hoc*, while Pollio—the severe Pollio—confesses that he loves "a nobility and amplitude of style" Horne Tooke demands (it was early!) "variety of cadence," and Andrew Marvell goes to the full length of saying that prose "may be infinitely varied in modulation"—nay, that it is "only an extension of metres, an amplification of harmonies of which even the best and most varied poetry admits but few" I feel little doubt that this last sentence thoroughly expresses Landor's opinion As far as prose is concerned, he could have quoted (but he did not like quotation) the passages from the ancients which we have cited at the opening of this book As far as poetry went, I think he speaks *pro domo sua* to some extent It is perfectly true that poetry at large cannot admit some harmonies which prose welcomes, just as prose refuses *all*, in the completed sense, that poetry admits But that "poetry admits few harmonies" may be true of Landor's, but is not true of poetry itself More especially in English poetry the bounty of its harmonies is as boundless as

<sup>1</sup> *V sup* p 228

the sea, though (as Juliet full well knew in her case) it may, and should, be bounded by the land of prose

These are no mere random "preliminary observations" they are intended to lead those readers who may not already have anticipated it to a definite grasp of Landor's position in the department of elaborate prose-writing. It is quite clear that he is aiming at—and, in scattered observations<sup>1</sup> through various mouthpieces, defining as much as it was in his nature to define—a sort of prose "Grand Style," which was to unite magnificence with a certain simplicity, severity with a not more than appropriate opulence. Elsewhere he approves the "colour" of Gibbon, being unquestionably right in doing so. I should think he vacillated, or at least oscillated, a little between the classical and the romantic poles of his curiously constituted taste, as to what the ancients called frigidity<sup>2</sup>. In fact (snatching once more at whatever mantlet I can get hold of to shield me from the charge of blasphemy), I should say that Landor *has* a certain frigidity of a kind, mixed and peculiar to himself, uniting both the ancient and the modern conceptions of the fault. But at his best he is absolutely successful, and so curiously charming that we should go to our specimens. I cannot help it if the best of the best are dreams, and I have said something of that head already. Besides, are not dreams "the best of the best" in all things, and the "best of the best," dreams?

An exceedingly characteristic piece is the following

At this | she smiled | faintly | and briefly, | and began | to break  
off | some | of the more glossy | leaves, | and we | who stood |  
around her | were ready | to take them | and place them | in her

<sup>1</sup> The reader may look up, if he likes, those in "Aristoteles and Callisthenes" (*Works*, II 184) on the dactyl as "the bindweed of prose," etc., or Chatham's, in the dialogue with Chesterfield, above cited, on congregations of short syllables (III 146) (where, however, Landor's most Landorian and unreasonable prejudice against Plato makes him forget the difference between Greek and English).

<sup>2</sup> It is not very different from the "turgidity" the charge of which (see "Conversations with Hare") was evidently a sore subject with him.

hair, | when suddenly | she held them | tighter | and let her hand |  
 drop | On her lover's | asking her | why | she hesitated, | she  
 blushed deeply, | and said, | "Phoroneus | told me | I look best | in  
 myrtle" |

Innocent | and simple | and most sweet, | I remember, | was her  
 voice, | and when | she had spoken | the traces of it | were re-  
 maining | on her lips | Her beautiful | throat | itself | changed  
 colour, | it seemed | to undulate, | and the roseate | predomin-  
 ated | in its pearly | hue | Phoroneus | had been | her admirer, |  
 she gave | the preference | to Critolaus, | yet the name | of  
 Phoroneus | had, | at that moment, | greater | effect | upon him |  
 than the re-collection<sup>1</sup> | of his | defeat

Thelynnia | recovered herself | sooner | We ran | wherever |  
 we saw | myrtles, | and there were many | about, | and she took | a  
 part | of her coronal | from every | one of us, | smiling | upon each, |  
 but it was only | of Critolaus | that she asked | if he thought | that  
 myrtle | became her best | "Phoroneus," | answered he, | not with-  
 out | melancholy, | "is infallible | as Paris" | There was something |  
 in the tint | of the tender | sprays | resembling | that of the hair |  
 they encircled, | the blossoms, too, | were white | as her forehead |  
 She reminded me | of those ancient | fables | which represent | the  
 favourites | of the Gods | as turning | into plants, | so accordant |  
 was her beauty | with the flowers | and foliage | she had chosen | to  
 adorn it |

Now Momus and Zoilus need not find themselves  
 absolutely baulked here In one of the prettiest and

<sup>1</sup> The reader may observe that I now seldom split words in scanning,  
 but I certainly think it necessary here At the same time, the passage has  
 places, of which this is one, *sermons pedestriori propria*, and the more *prosaic*  
 prose, as has been repeatedly pointed out, is tolerant of sections of six, and  
 indeed more syllables "Than the recollection" in one foot batch is  
 quite possible

most closely observed passages "undulate," "roseate," and "predominate" are too near. One misses the beautiful English word "rosial," which lasted up to the middle of the seventeenth century, though a "brootle and savidge" editor of Landor's time actually changed it, in *Pharonmda*, to "roseate." "Him" and "his" at the end of the same paragraph are ambiguous<sup>1</sup>. But these are mere beauty-spots. The piece may, to some tastes, have a little of its author's occasional approach to mawkishness of sentiment, but its execution is very nearly perfect. The extreme *quietness* of Landor—the music and motion as of the brooklet stealing through little pebbles (to use the old image)—must strike any fit reader. Some of his mannerisms, particularly that of the monosyllabic close, are noticeable, and the insistence of the Ionic *a minore* towards the end of the piece might seem—if the notation were given without the words—dangerously "rocking-horsy", but it is entirely saved by those words themselves. If you compare it with De Quincey, there is somewhat less intensity and somewhat less volume of sound, but the music is something sweeter and something more subtle, though altogether in a minor key<sup>2</sup>.

The famous "Dream of Euthymedes"—the Allegory of Love, Hope, and Fear—which follows this, is not only beautiful, but is a still more remarkable example of quiet symphony and polyphony. Unfortunately it is very long, and scarcely divisible, so I shall substitute for it another well-known dream, that of Boccaccio, which is perhaps Landor's most commonly accepted "diploma-piece," and which has the advantage of forming a much closer pendant to some things of De Quincey's greatest, while it at least equally displays the difference of handling and

<sup>1</sup> This is not a mere grammaticaster's quibble. Any ambiguity of sense—any necessity to ask yourself "What does this mean?" "to whom does this apply?" etc.—distracts the attention from the music.

<sup>2</sup> The long sequence of amphibrachs towards the beginning (āround her | were ready, etc.) is rather unusual elsewhere, but I think characteristic. It violates no law, for the amphibrach, as I have tried to show in my work on Prosody, is not exactly a citizen of English verse, though it has the fullest civic rights in prose.

fingering between the two masters We shall, I hope, find in it ground for more strictly critical consideration of the merits and defects of the two than the crude placing as "best" and "second-best" in which some critics have indulged to De Quincey's disadvantage, and in which I shall certainly not attempt to "bring the balance true" by depreciating Lander<sup>1</sup>

What a moment | of agony | was this | to me | Could I | be  
certain | how long | might be her absence? | She went, | I was  
following, | she made | a sign to me | to turn back | I | disobeyed  
her | only an instant, | yet my sense | of disobedience,<sup>2</sup> | increasing |  
my feebleness | and confusion,<sup>3</sup> | made me | lose sight of her | In  
the next | moment | she was again | at my side | with the cup |  
quite full | I stood | motionless, | I feared | my breath | might  
shake | the water | over | I looked her | in the face | for her  
commands— | and to see it— | to see it | so calm, | so beneficent, | so  
beautiful | I was forgetting | what I had prayed for | when she  
lowered | her head, | tasted | of the cup, | and gave it me | I  
drank, | and suddenly | sprang forth | before me | many | groves, |  
and palaces, | and gardens, | and their statues, | and their avenues, |  
and their labyrinths | of alaternus | and bay, | and alcoves | of  
citron, | and watchful | loopholes | in the retirements | of im-

<sup>1</sup> He is perhaps the palmary instance of something that has been indicated in the last paragraph of the Preface to this book The whole of this chapter would not be too much for a discussion of all the characteristics of his style, but such a discussion would be as wholly out of place If any one thinks that, though not an idle and offensive "placing," yet something of a distinction, should be attempted here between the three masters who have been noticed, it may be shortly done The *anapæst* of De Quincey, which he comes something worse in Wilson, is a tendency to rant and rococo that of Lander a tendency to "prunes and prisms" But in the two greater the "frailty" never accomplishes a tragedy, and seldom outgoes the indulgence accorded by Longinus, and by all his children the good critics, to an absence of faultlessness

<sup>2</sup> Objection may be taken to *mysometimes*, perhaps usually, taking "-ience," "ion," etc., as monosyllabic The *Quarterly* was no doubt ignorantly wrong in scolding Keats for making them dissyllables, but the other value is certainly commoner in modern English, especially if it be prose

pēnētrā|blē pomegrānāte | Fārthēr off, | júst bēlōw | whēre thē  
 fōuntāin | slīpt āwāy | frōm its mārblē | hāl | and gūārdiān | gōds, |  
 ārōse frōm thēir bēds | of mōss, | and drōsērā, | and dārkest | grāss |  
 thē sīstērhood | of olēānders, | fōnd | of tāntālīsīng, | with thēir  
 bōsōmēd | flōwers | and thēir mōist | and pōutīng | blōssōms, | thē  
 littlē | shy | rīvulēt, | and of cōvērīng | its fācē | with āll | thē  
 cōlōurs | of thē dāwn | M̄y Drēam | ēxpāndēd | and mōvēd  
 fōrwārd | I t̄rod | āgām | thē dūst | of Pōsilīppo, | sōft | ās thē  
 fēāthērs | in thē wīngs | of Slēep | I ēmērgēd | on Bāiā, | I |  
 crōssēd | hēr innu|merāblē ārchēs, | I lōitēiēd | in thē brēēzy |  
 sūnshīnē | of hēr mōlē, | I trūstēd | thē fāithfūl | sēclūsīōn | of hēr  
 cāvērns, | thē kēēpers | of sō māny | sēcrēts, | and I rēposēd | on  
 thē buōyāncy | of hēr tēpid | sēā | Thēn Nāplēs, | and hēr thēātrēs, |  
 and hēr chūrchēs, | and grōttōēs, | and dēlls, | and fōrts, | and  
 prōmōntōriēs | rūshēd fōrwārd | in cōnfūsīōn, | nōw | āmōng sōft |  
 whīspērs, | nōw āmōng swēētēst | sōunds, | and sūbsīdēd, | and  
 sānk, | and dīspāpēārēd | Yēt ā mēmōry | sēēmēd | tō cōmē frēsh |  
 frōm ēvērī ōnē, | ēāch | hād tīmē | ēnōugh | for its tālē, | for its  
 plēāsūrē, | for its rēflēctīōn, | for its pāng | As I mōuntēd | with  
 sīlēt | stēps, | thē nārrow | stāircāsē | of thē ōld | pālācē, | hōw  
 dīstīnctly | dīd I fēēl | āgāīnst thē pālēm | of m̄y hānd | thē cōldnēss |  
 of thē smōōth | stōnē wōrk, | and thē grēātēr | of thē crāmps of īrōn |  
 in it

Here, once more, is no absolute "faultlessness"—indeed Momus and Zoilus might have even easier game with this, and I do not know that the very genius and generosity of Longinus himself could make all the faults into beauty-spots. Landor has been specially complimented on his freedom from "the fault of breaking up prose into the fixed and recurrent rhythm of verse." I am not clear myself, long as has been my practice

in prosodic manipulation, how you can apply this compliment to

I trod again the dust of Posilippo,  
Soft as the feathers in the wings of Sleep

It is, unluckily, a single sentence, it cannot fall back on buttresses, before and after, of the context so as to merge itself in them, and even the rhetorical counter-cadence of the second line, "Soft | as the feathers | in the wings | of Sleep," is one frequent in blank verse itself. It is so beautiful that Exciseman Gill himself could hardly fire a pistol or make a grab at it, but I fear it is a little contraband. "Greater" again, without "coldness" repeated or some equivalent inserted, is questionable, and a hearer of the piece might be pardoned a moment's puzzlement—not conducive to enjoyment—as to whether the iron cramps did not *grate* (in some unusual derivative of that word) on the hand. While from the point of view of "The Blessed Meaning," somebody might ask whether there is any real opposition, or sufficient difference, between "soft whispers" and "sweetest sounds." For it hath been held by them of old time that it would be rather difficult to get a sweeter sound than one kind of "soft whisper."

But are *we* Momus? Are *we* Zoilus? Forbid it, Heaven! though the first was a kind of sort of God, and the latter has been at least the tutelary saint of a very large section of the most admired critics. There may be things—indeed there are—as beautiful as that in English prose, there is none more beautiful, while it is at the same time abundantly characteristic. The short clauses or sub-sentences already noticeable in the extract first given, shorn of copulas and conjunctions adversative, appear at once. Many, if not most, writers would have written "*and* I was following," "*but* she made," "*and* though I disobeyed," etc. It would not have made the sentence unmusical, but it would have made a weaker and *sloppier* music. The monosyllabic endings—"full" backed up by two precedent long monosyllables, "dawn,"

"sleep," "mole," "sea"—recur likewise. The extension and rescission of foot and foot-closing word, cunningly connected with meaning as well as with measure, can seldom be found exemplified anywhere better than in "Each had time enough *for its tale, for its pleasure, for its reflection, for its pang*—anapæst, pæon, dochmiac, anapæst again, with the closing words of the feet—long monosyllable, trochee, amphibrach, and recurring long monosyllable. The Ionic makes its presence felt throughout, sometimes explicitly, sometimes in an "under-hum," derived from the marriage of two adjacent feet. But it is rather more of a seasoning, and rather less of a solid, than in the other piece<sup>1</sup>

But let us take some pieces of a different character, reserving the right to return to others nearer to this. Here is a little bit of description, very cunningly rhythmized. And if any one objects to the inversion and ellipsis of "pleasant" as too poetic, let him remember that in the very first English prose-writers who tried to make prose ornate, such as Bishop Fisher, the means is resorted to

Look then | around thee | freely, | perplexed | no longer |  
 Pleasant | is this level | eminence, | surrounded | by broom | and  
 myrtle, | and crisp leaved | beech | and broad | dark pine | above |  
 Pleasant | the short | slender | grass, | bent | by insects | as they |  
 alight on it | or climb along it, | and shining | up | into our eyes, |  
 interrupted | by tall | sisterhoods | of grey | lavender, | and by dark-  
 eyed | cistus, | and by lightsome | cistus, | and by little troops | of  
 serpolet | running | in disorder | here and there

The insidious and irrepressible heroic—*omnibus rhythmis insurgens*—crops up here again in

And crisp leaved beech and broad dark pine above  
 But *here* you can throw "and crisp-leaved beech" back

<sup>1</sup> Observe, too, the effect, after the unusual run of long-foot pæons and dochmiacs "and their statues," etc., of the iamb, with its strong monosyllabic latter half "and bay," as a tonic contrast



to the preceding rhythm group ("surrounded by broom and myrtle, and crisp-leaved beech"), while "and broad dark pine above," thanks to the almost molossian combination or group of three separate long monosyllables, also escapes the suggestion "Tall sisterhoods of grey lavender" is a cunning and consummate instance of vowel-sound contrast, while "cistus" and "citius," with their respective epithets, give undoubtedly a bold but successful try at nearly, but not quite, exact consonance<sup>1</sup>

There are several favourite passages in the "Æsop and Rhodope", but the most frequently quoted—that describing the sale of the child by her famished father—derives part of its charm from a set and intentional puerility which would render elaborate rhythm unsuitable. Another, and one of the most perfect of all, I postpone. And I think that elsewhere Landor has a little undergone the charge of being too definitely poetical, if not in form, at any rate in phrase

Pleasant | is yonder | beanfield | seen | over the high | papyrus |  
when it waves | and bends, | deep-laden | with the sweet | heaviness |  
of its odour | is the listless | air | that palpitates | dizzily | above it,  
but Death | is lurking | for the slumberer | beneath | its blossoms

is beautiful but (I am content myself to undergo the charge of hypercriticism) it seems to me too definitely *stichic*—it is not rhythmical prose so much as loosely metred verse. It is classable with Blake and Whitman, not with Taylor and Browne. And it is obvious that that ambidexterity with the two harmonies which has been credited to Landor would be likely to lead to this sometimes. On the other hand, a piece of extraordinary beauty (not, I think, given by Sir Sidney Colvin), but standing, like some of De Quincey's noted above, in most interesting proximity to the standard style itself, is this from "Brooke and Sidney"

<sup>1</sup> It should be noticed here, as well as in the last extract, that Landor makes great play with the *xenon*—the unfamiliar but well sounding word—"alaternus," "drosera," "serpolet."

Ay, my friend, | there is a greater | difference | both in the  
 stages | of life | and in the seasons | of the year | than in the | con-  
 ditions | of men, | yet the healthy | pass | through the seasons |  
 from the clement | to the inclement, | not only | unreluctantly, | but  
 rejoicingly, | knowing | that the worst | will soon | finish | and the  
 best | begin | anew, | and we | are desirous | of pushing | forward |  
 into every | stage | of life | excepting | that | alone | which ought |  
 to allure | us most | as opening | to us | the Via Sacra | along  
 which | we move | in triumph | to our eternal | country | We labour |  
 to get through | the moments | of our life | as we would | to get  
 through | a crowd | Such | is our impatience, | such | our hatred  
 of | procrastination | in everything | but the amendment | of our  
 practices | and the adornment | of our nature, | one would imagine |  
 we were dragging | Time | along | by force | and not he us | We  
 may | in some measure | frame | our minds | for the reception | of  
 happiness— | for more | or for less, | we should, however, | well | con-  
 sider | to what port | we are steering | in search of it, | and that  
 even | in the richest | its quantity | is but too | exhaustible | It is  
 easier | to alter | the modes | and qualities | of it | than to increase |  
 its stores | There is | a sickness | in the firmest | of us | which  
 induceth us | to change | our side, | though reposing | ever | so  
 softly, | yet, | wittingly | or unwittingly, | we turn | again | soon |  
 into our old | position | Afterward | when we have fixed, | as we  
 imagine, | on the object | most | desirable, | we start | extravagantly, |  
 and blinded by | the rapidity | of our course | toward | the treasure |  
 we would seize | and dwell with, | we find | another hand | upon the  
 lock | the hand | of one | standing | in the shade | 'tis  
 Death !

Here, on the contrary, is another<sup>1</sup> which is of the first

<sup>1</sup> From "Mahomet and Sergius"

interest because it is eighteenth century in substance, but eighteenth century saturated with the new tone. If any one will compare it with one of the De Quincey pieces or with its author's own "Dream of Boccaccio" above, he will see at once what I mean.

Delightful | is it | to battle | in the moonsea | on the sands | and  
to listen | to tales | of geni | in the tent, | but then | in Arabia |  
the anxious | heart | is thrown | into fierce | and desperate | com-  
motion | by the accursed | veil | that separates | beauty | from us

Here | we never | see the blade | of that | sweet herbage | rise |  
day after day | into light and loveliness, | never | see the blossom |  
expand, | but receive it | unselected, | unsolicited, | and unwon |  
Happy | the land | where the youthful | are without | veils, | the  
aged | without | suspicion, | where the antelope | may look | to  
what resting-place | she listeth, | and bend | her slender | foot | to  
the fountain | that most | invites her

Odoriferous<sup>1</sup> | gales | whether of Deban | or Dafar, | if ye bring |  
only fragrance | with you, | carry it | to the thoughtless | and light-  
hearted | carry it | to the drinker | of wine, | to the feaster | and  
the dancer | at the feast. | If ye never | have played | about | the  
beloved | of my youth, | if ye bring me | no intelligence | of her,  
pass on | away with you!

There is much in that which Addison, which Johnson, which even Burke, could not, or certainly would not, have given, and yet somehow "the bones of it," as the familiar phrase goes, are not foreign to those of the "Vision of Mirza" and the more ambitious parts of *Rasselas*, still less to the flights of Burke. As I scan it I feel that sense of superfluity—though not of incongruity—of which I have spoken before. The hinges of its rhythm are things like

<sup>1</sup> I have pointed out elsewhere (*Hist Pros* III 410) that this word is bad in English verse of any kind. In prose it must, I think, take the above scansion, but I think it should be avoided there also.

the position of "on the ranks" and "in the tent," where the clauses swing backwards and forwards on them, rhetorical emphasis, like "unselected, unsolicited, and unwon," where, though there *is* the foot contrast, it hurries, neglecting itself, to the mere stress of "unwon" There is altogether too much *elocution* about the piece, it suggests the declaimer, stooping and rising and throwing his hands about and advancing to the edge or retiring to the back of the rostrum, raising and lowering his voice, and running over long strings of almost slurred syllables, till he pounces on and explodes the chosen one It has the rhythm that such rhetoric requires, but then we must take rhetoric not in its highest sense

Compare the following It, too, is descriptive, it is passionate, and it ends like the last, with a direct rhetorical address, this time to a person But it neither trespasses on the region of half-metred verse, nor has it the limitations of the oratorical balance and adaptation to "delivery" If not of the most exquisite, it is that almost more valuable if less delightful thing for us—a specimen eminently characteristic of the author

So say | all fathers, | so say | all husbands | Look | at any | old  
 mansion-house | and let | the sun | shine | as gloriously | as it may |  
 on the golden vanes | or the arms | recently | quartered | over the  
 gateway | or the emblazoned | window | and on the happy | pair |  
 that haply | is toying at it Nevertheless | thou mayst say | of a  
 certainty | that the same | fabric | hath seen | much sorrow | within |  
 its chambers | and heard | many | wailings, | and each time | this  
 was | the heaviest | stroke | of all | Funerals | have passed | along |  
 through the stout-hearted | knights | upon the wainscot | and the  
 laughing | nymphs | upon the arras | Old servants | have shaken |  
 their heads | as if somebody | had deceived them | when they found |  
 that beauty | and nobility | could perish

Edmund! | the things | that are too true | pass by us | as if |

they were not | true | at all, | and when | they have singled | us  
out | then only | do they strike us | Thou and I | must go too  
Perhaps | the next year | may blow us | away | with its fallen | leaves

That is very quiet and not in the least in the *bravura* kind. But not the rhythmical value of a single syllable is lost, and the music is heard all through, not in bursts and silences, or in alternations of melody and recitative. There are numerous trochaic endings—that the trochee among its manifold and curious qualities has a peculiar note of wailing should be noticed—and it will be good to contrast with the antithesis just noted of “on the sands” and “in the tent” that, so unantithetical, of “upon the wainscot” and “upon the arras”

Of citations from Landor there could be no end if Pleasure were dictatress, but Duty, that insufficiently engaging but peremptory daughter of the great Voice, fixes a limit. Let us conclude with two short passages of extraordinary beauty—one distinguished by absolute liberation from the style of marked balance, the other showing a certain inclination towards that style, but more away from it

There is a gloom | in deep love | as in deep | water, | there is a  
silence | in it | which suspends | the foot, | and the folded | arms |  
and the dejected | head | are the images | it reflects | No voice |  
shakes | its surface, | the Muses | themselves | approach it | with a  
tardy | and a timid | step, | and with a low | and tremulous | and  
melancholy | song

Here the image, beautiful as it is, may have a little of that conventional appropriation of special features and gestures to special emotions in which eighteenth-century æstheticians revelled till they sometimes became ridiculous. But the rhythm is simply perfect. I should put it beside the passage of the eyes of the Mater Suspiriorum as unsurpassed since, the renaissance of numerous prose. The Ionic, as usual, is not a little responsible\* for its

motive, but it is greatly varied, and in the exquisite last clause ("and with a low and tremulous and melancholy song") it is not present at all

The other (the reserved one from Æsop and Rhodope) is rather longer and more complex, and there is absolutely no possibility of Mephistopheles intruding his cock's-feather, but it is a *leetle* more rhetorical

Laodameia | died, | Helen | died, | Leda, | the beloved | of  
Jupiter, | went before | It is better | to repose | in the earth | be-  
times | than to sit up late,<sup>1</sup> | better | than to cling | pertinaciously |  
to what | we feel crumbling | under us, | and to protract | an in-  
evitable fall | We may enjoy | the present | while we are |  
insensible | of infirmity | and decay, | but the present, | like a  
note | in music, | is nothing | but as it | appertains | to what is past |  
and to what | is to come | There are no fields | of amaranth | on  
this side | of the grave, | there are no voices, | O Rhodope, | that  
are not | soon mute, | however | tuneful, | there is no name, | with  
whatever | emphasis | of passionate | love | repeated, | of which the  
echo | is not faint | at last

Beyond these great-in-little descants on the two master-themes of literature, Love and Death, it is probably unnecessary to go, and here, as with the other, it does not seem indispensable to make much detailed comment.<sup>2</sup> The scansion should speak for itself to all who are able to hear it, and those who cannot are

<sup>1</sup> It is not disagreeable to remember that he who wrote this was himself to "sit up late" far beyond the usual bed time, to congratulate himself on having had time to "warm both hands before the fire of life." Even putting his "dramatic" element aside, there is no real inconsistency in the two expressions: they are the motives of the two sides of that shield of mood, which, if we could not turn it, would be but half a protection to us.

<sup>2</sup> When we draw, or at least attempt, general conclusions, it will be permissible to return to these perhaps. But meanwhile I may suggest attention to a small point. Elsewhere Landor, with his usual precision (oh, call it not pedantry!), prefers the form "Helenæ" as more classical. But here the three final *a*'s of the names would be importunate, and he admits the English shortening.

certainly not likely to have reached, save in a casual and disgusted dip, the 341st page of this book

On the work of these three masters—who, let it be remembered, were all writing, though all the pieces cited from them were not written, if not actually by 1820, by a period very little later, and perhaps in some cases earlier—as well as on that of Coleridge, which is actually older than the century, a few general observations may be permissible, especially as we purpose nothing more of the nature of an “Interchapter” before the “Conclusion” itself. That there is something, in every example which has been given, markedly different from any prose that we have seen, since the third quarter of the seventeenth century at latest, few will, I think, deny, though whether the change is an improvement or not is, of course, an entirely open question. Of the nature of that change itself it would be possible to say many things, but a good many of these also would be doubtfully relevant or certainly not so. Whether—to reverse and embroider the application of Johnson’s metaphor on Dryden—they found English prose stucco and left it like the stones of St Mark, or whether they found it like the Parthenon at Athens and left it like the Pavilion at Brighton, we are not here to decide. But in the rhythmical view—though, once more, the “for-better-for-worse” remains a matter of taste—the fact of the change is unquestionable, and the nature of it is our proper business for observations and considerations.

The most important of these is something which has been frequently glanced at, but which it is perhaps by this time possible and desirable to set forth in a more explicit and orderly fashion. The principle from which this book starts, and which, as Dante says,<sup>1</sup> “we do not argue about but take for granted,” is that formulated in the quotation from Quintilian on the title-page—the omnipresence, in speech and writing alike, of at least the materials of rhythm, contrasted in a fashion which something like the *communis*

<sup>1</sup> *Unamquamque doctrinam oportet non probare, sed suum aperire subjectum*  
(*De vulg. eloq.* I 1)

*sensus* of Europe has agreed, until recently at any rate, to call "long" and "short" These contrasted values may be treated with such slovenliness that anything like a distinct and harmonious rhythm disappears, but the materials of it remain in almost any possible articulation, and in almost any possible juxtaposition of written words It assumes *some* structure and arrangement even in the ordinary conversation of educated and well-bred persons, and literature can hardly exist without it But, in literature, the character and complexity of its structure assumes forms the difference of which, for our present purpose especially, may be conveniently reduced to four—their order (for the same reasons of convenience) being in a sense reversed, so that we may proceed from the most elaborate downward and not *vice versa* These forms or groups of forms are

I Poetry or metre

II Unmetrical or only partially metrical poetry, which, however, retains the arrangement of "verse," or division into sections not identical but corresponding with one another, definitely separated by a considerable pause, which is not determined merely by the sense

III Fully but strictly rhythmical prose

IV Prose in which rhythm, though present, is subordinated to other considerations<sup>1</sup>

With the first—metre or poetry proper—we have nothing to do here except in so far as it is probably the oldest form of literature, and therefore of literate rhythm, and in so far likewise as it forms a useful contrast, and even as it were a sort of *garde-fou* in our enquiries In it the rhythm is always arranged correspondingly, though sometimes in a very intricate correspondence, with the answering parts at considerable distances one from another, and though large substitution of equivalent rhythmical units is in some cases permitted In other words, the principle of sameness is that which is at the

<sup>1</sup> It does not seem necessary to make a special division for the prose which employs arbitrary mechanical divisions, not rhythmical or quasi metrical in character, but for rhetorical effect, like that of Sterne, Lamb, or Carlyle, in their different ways



bottom of it, though this sameness may be, and in all the very best poetry always is, allied with as much variety as is consistent with its preservation. And one main, if not all but autocratic and automatic, means of securing this is the division into "lines" or "verses," which, in their recurrence, bring out this identity in diversity.

The second division is small in its contents, comparatively recent in its appearance as regards most eminent and modern European literatures, and perhaps not, in the general opinion, absolutely sure of a valid position, but still logically entitled to demand a place with the other three. It arises when the writer, desirous of retaining a mechanical division of his word-groups somewhat similar to that of verse, and usually intending to retain also much rhythm and even something like metre, rejects the principle of actual recurrence and correspondence in length, quantitative equivalence and the like, while generally also retaining a good deal of specially poetic *diction*. This in a more or less original form—that of "parallelism"—appears to be of secular existence in Oriental poetry. With a strong cant or tilt towards metre itself, it, or something very like it, exists in the older Teutonic poetry. And by an apparently direct result of the union of Hebrew and Teutonic influences in the sixteenth-century translations of the Bible—pushed further by the individual predilections and achievements of three English-speaking persons of talent, which on two occasions amounted to genius—it has had some very remarkable examples in the last two centuries. These are Macpherson's *Ossian*, which influenced all Europe, and produced a kind of prose-verse even in French—language of all European languages most apparently ill-suited to it, Blake's "Prophetic" books, which have been imitated, though never successfully, and the peculiar manner, of which almost as much may be said, of Walt Whitman. If, in some characteristics, this medium is certainly not verse, in others it is as certainly not prose, but it will scarcely be deemed criminal if we devote at least a short Appendix to it.

It is necessary, however (and this necessity has by no

means always been recognised), to distinguish it most carefully from the pure but highly rhythmical prose which has been the subject of this chapter, which will, to some extent, figure in the next, and which may absorb the whole of yet another before we have finished. This prose does not require, and at its best ought not to suffer, distribution into snippets. It bears, as prose should, no other mechanical groupings than those of clause, sentence, and paragraph, and its sentences should possess reasonable continuity of rhythm throughout the whole of the paragraph, the close of which, and that only, is the place of breaking-off. This prose, however, is fully, and in every syllable, susceptible of quantification and consequent foot-scansion, the full necessary character of all speech and writing (*vide* motto) being thus loyally recognised and brought out. But this scansion is arranged on a principle totally different, and indeed opposed, when compared with that of poetry. Instead of sameness, equivalence, and recurrence, the central idea turns on difference, inequality, and variety. And though a certain amount of correspondence is introduced by the necessary presence of the identical quantity-combinations called *feet*, these are to be so arranged that they will not constitute *metre*. Fragments of different metres—melted or welded rather than dovetailed or mosaicked into the whole—can hardly be avoided, and indeed will positively improve it, but if they emerge and “stick out” it is doomed. Its great law is that every syllable shall, as in poetry, have recognisable rhythmical value, and be capable of entering into rhythmical transactions with its neighbours, but that these transactions shall always stop short, or steer clear, of admitting the recurrent combinations proper to metre.

The enormous bulk of prose, though in gradations differing extremely from one another, may be arranged downward from this, according to the amount of attention which the writer has paid to rhythm as such, the principles of it which he has adopted, and the success with which he has carried these principles out. We have seen that even some of the masterpieces of De Quincey

and Landor show a certain tendency to sink from the polyphonic and symphonic music of the highest kind to the antithetic groups, oratorical or other, of the standard style. It is, at first sight, curious, though not perhaps really surprising,<sup>1</sup> that hardly anything of the same sort is to be found in the great symphonists of the seventeenth century. We have done, however, no despite to this style, which, in its highest examples, is satisfying if not exactly delectable, or, at least, transporting, and which is undoubtedly the best for the general purposes of prose. But it has been pointed out that, in all but its very best examples, though a not unpleasant rhythmical effect may be got out of the clause-pairs or batches taken together, the rhythmical appeal dwindles through clause, and word-group, and word, and syllable, and letter, till it sometimes very nearly vanishes. Although in good English delivery, as in good English writing, the principle of general atonic equality, diversified with crashes and bursts of emphasis, never prevails as it does in French, some progress is made in this direction. The foot-division, inseparable from rhythm and scarcely capable of extension beyond the fifth syllable, becomes merged in long section-sweeps, which are hardly analysable. And this, increasing as you go lower, constitutes the main difference between the whole of this Fourth class and the fully rhythmised Third.<sup>2</sup>

Thus rhythmical prose, in its perfection, is distinguished from poetry by subtle but easily recognisable differences of diction, arrangement, and the like, but most of all, and most essentially, by the absence of definite and ostentatious correspondence in rhythmical-metrical character, and of equivalent or definitely corresponding "lines." It is

<sup>1</sup> The fact is simply that this style was not yet discovered generally, though there is something much like it, especially in Jonson. Extravagant and often caricatured balance, as in Lyly, and even before him in Ascham, was common, but Dryden had not yet come.

<sup>2</sup> It would require, of course, a very elaborate system of sub classification to take in all the varieties. Some very distinguished and delightful writers, such as Goldsmith, would, in fact, have to be "species by themselves," like Walton above (p. 216) and Lamb below (p. 362). But I do not think that, in a book on the present scale, I am bound to provide *excursus* of this kind.

separated from the various hybrids of the Ossianic, Blakite, or Whitmanian kind in the same way, though not to the same degree, in more respects than one—especially in the absence of even irregular stichic division. It obeys to the full that universal law of prose which dictates continuous and uninterrupted flow, not merely to the close of the sentence, but (with a difference of course) to the close of the paragraph. Yet it retains, in a greater degree perhaps than some at least of these hybrids, the rhythmical valuation of every word and syllable, and by this retention, as well as by the intense variety of its rhythm, it is further distinguished from the lower kinds of prose proper.

The work of all the writers with whom this chapter has been more specially busy lasted till well into the second half of the nineteenth century, Wilson surviving the dividing line for nearly a lustrum, De Quincey for nearly a decade, and Landor until the century had all but entered upon its last third. But their position as pioneers is quite unaffected by this, and it will not prevent us, any more than the fact that Mr Ruskin's work had begun long before even Wilson died, from making an arrangement of the remaining subjects, convenient in practice and not really repugnant to chronology.

## CHAPTER X

### MISCELLANEOUS PROSE, 1820-1860

The coexistence of different styles in 1820—Momentary return to Landor—Comparative merits—The “standard” still prevalent, but with a tendency to degradation—Definition of “slovenliness”—Return to examples—Coleridge again—Jeffrey—Note on italics—Chalmers—Note on Irving—Hazlitt—Lamb—Leigh Hunt—Carlyle—Macaulay—The novelists Miss Austen and Peacock—Lord Beaconsfield—Dickens—Thackeray—Newman

THE space devoted, in the last chapter, to the farthest developments of rhythmical prose up to date should, of course, misguide no one as to the existence of many other kinds during the lifetime of the authors there chiefly discussed, or even as to the practice, actually there noticed, of these same writers in different styles. By far the larger part of Landor's voluminous prose is, like the larger part by far of De Quincey's, written in a variety of the “standard” style, and it may even be said that, for the moment, few took up the new method.

It may possibly amuse some readers to repeat an experience which I made, just before writing these words, in re-reading the *Conversations* straight through. At the distance of a bare half-dozen pages (*Works*, II 171-177) the two following short passages specially caught my eye. Here is the first:

On perceiving the countryman, she [*a tigress suckling her young*] drew up her feet gently, and squared her mouth, and rounded her eyes, slumberous with content, and they looked, he said, like sea-grottoes, obscurely green, interminably deep, at once awaking fear and stilling and compressing it.

## The other is this

Where priests have much influence the gods have little, and where they are numerous and wealthy, the population is scanty and miserably poor War may be, and certainly is, destructive, but war, as thou well knowest, if it cuts off boughs and branches, yet withers not the trunk

Here Momus may suggest that "and compressing" is otiose in meaning and not exactly an improvement in rhythm, and Zoilus may say that "as thou well knowest" is superfluous and out of keeping The Judicious Critic will prefer to draw attention to the polar difference between the colour, the tone, and the consequent rhythmical effect of the two, both of them, by the way, occurring in Greek conversations, in both of which Xenophon actually figures The first has, in its small compass, every characteristic of the new mode—exact and subtle observation of "the streaks of the tulip," careful expression of it in specially selected and coloured words, and arrangement of those words in harmonies, every note of which requires valuation in order to get the full effect The other, though there is a "figure" in it, appeals to the intellect only, and therefore contents itself with the old balanced and counter-parted arrangement, where the clauses zigzag in parallels like the bars of a double rule I do no despite to this "standard style", as I have again and again observed, I think it ought to be kept in nine out of ten, if not for ninety-nine out of a hundred, instances, and I differ as strongly as possible with the notion of some, if not most, of our younger critics, that every prose writer should aim at flourish and arabesque, at the *mot rayonnant* and the epithet fetched from Tarshish, golden or *wourine*, peacockish or perhaps apish, as the case may be I do not want the concert of the plain of Dura as a constant accompaniment to my daily food of prose But I certainly would not spare to interpose these things whenever there is time and temper to enjoy them, and I consider them, though not (as some do vainly talk) a greater delight to the senses of the mind than poetry itself, one hardly less

The vast majority of writers for nearly a couple of

generations showed themselves to be of no very different opinion in practice as to one-half of this, though probably few of them would have assented to the other in theory. An eccentric or two, such as Lamb earlier and Carlyle later, excepted, not merely Southey but the vast majority of English prose-men from 1800 to 1840 at least aimed at the standard style. Most people did the same from 1840 to 1860, though a new prophet of rhythm *in excelsis* like Ruskin might gain a few followers. And the comparison of the *Life of Schiller* with Carlyle's own later work shows—it is indeed a commonplace of style-criticism—that Carlyle himself might conceivably never have written in any other. For a time the elaborate rhythm is as a voice sounded in the desert.

But this standard style itself—though, in the hands not merely of Southey but of younger men like Lockhart, it produced work of all but the highest excellence, of the very highest perhaps in its own class—though in those of others, especially of Newman, it took to itself something of the fuller rhythms, and became a thing of incomparable idiosyncrasy and beauty—was yet necessarily subject to that mysterious law of disease and degradation which is observable everywhere—in the young gazelle, in the “piece of bread, Particularly large and wide,” and therefore also in prose. Once more the phenomenon which the Byzantine patriarch had formulated in the ninth century repeated itself in the nineteenth, and the clear, plain, simple style “fell to flatness and meanness.”

How early this degradation took place, and exactly what its character was, are points on which difference of opinion will inevitably arise. I find such difference (of the friendliest kind as before, and without any Athanasian certainty on my own part that he is wrong and I am right) between myself and Sir Henry Craik. In fact, this disagreement is only a sort of corollary of the other, formerly noted, as to Johnson. Sir Henry thinks that eighteenth-century prose (not merely Johnson's, but in general) was “stately,” but that “before that century had passed the tradition of stateliness had waned,” and that

prose passed, with the nineteenth, into a tripartite degeneration of sham formality (such as that of Jeffrey and even Macaulay), fantastic ornament (such as that of De Quincey and Landor), and archaic or antique phraseology (such as that of Lamb or Carlyle). But he does not lay much stress on a fourth "corruption," as Aristotle would say, that of slovenliness. Now I should myself (as indeed the reader will partly anticipate from what has been said already) not merely exempt De Quincey, Landor, Lamb, and Carlyle from all taint of corruption of any kind, but put the "standard style" of the first generation, at least, of the nineteenth century, as a style general, and for purposes of all work and every day, far above that of any writer of the eighteenth, with perhaps the exception of Berkeley. I should put down the "stilts," the pedantic mannerisms, as, if not a *damnosa hereditas* from Johnson himself, at any rate a misuse of his goods, of which some prodigal sons like Hawkesworth earlier, and Mackintosh later, were guilty long before the eighteenth ended. And I should put the great sin of the early nineteenth as "slovenliness," from which, though I do not specially admire average eighteenth-century prose, I admit that it was mostly free.

It is, however, very necessary to define this word with some care, for, like other words of its class, if not of most classes, it is commonly used with the greatest looseness. Half-educated critics have a constant tendency to confuse idiom with solecism, and "bad grammar" with breaches of the rules of grammar-*books* which have no authority at all. They shy at words with which they are themselves unfamiliar, without considering whether these words are correctly formed, whether they supply a single designation for something that would otherwise require a cumbersome periphrasis, whether they add colour and tone to the composition, whether they increase that stock of not exact but pretty close synonyms which is the greatest treasure and glory of the English language. But these things, and many others that are commonly objected to as "slovenly," are, necessarily at least, nothing of the kind.



Slovenliness is something quite different. It may be said generally to require ignorance, carelessness, and bad taste, in about equal proportions, but exercised usually in the sequence just given. The sloven does not know the good, does not care whether what he chooses is good or bad, and is inclined by his nature to the latter. But the neologist must know not a little and take some pains, the parenthetic writer must be thoughtful, and anxious to express his full thought. Even slang need not be slovenly if it is employed, not out of slothful complaisance, but to give force, colour, and idiosyncrasy. True slovenliness has myriad forms, but it may generally be traced to a habit of writing, not in the writer's own way, but with tags and catchwords and commonplaces picked out of the common gutter, and huddled together regardless of the principles of real (not book) grammar, of the proper sequence of thought, of the usage of the best writers, and of the general tendency and constitution of English. And in this respect, I think, the average nineteenth-century writer, at least for two-thirds of the century, was more peccant than his father, grandfather, or great-grandfather of the eighteenth.

But it may be said, "What has all this to do with rhythm?" Why, a good deal. I shall scarcely be charged with having made a Baal or a Juggernaut of meaning, or of being a martinet as to vocabulary and grammar. But unless due (not undue) attention is paid to all these things, the mind has not the serenity which is necessary to the enjoyment of the harmony of prose. The "added charm of metre" may sometimes disguise nonsense, but, for my part, since "numerous prose" became common, I find nonsense in it (which is necessarily more common likewise) more disgusting than ever, and a really bad piece of really bad English will poison any fountain from Bandusia to Eunoe itself. "Reliable" is, as far as sound goes, a perfectly good second pæon, fit, *pro tanto*, to appear anywhere, but its illegitimate formation<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course I know its defenders and their defences. But, except in mere sound—

"It is loathsome and worthless in every sense,  
And loathsome it will be a hundred years hence."

and its vulgar society would make it as a flesh-fly in opobalsamum, even though the sentence in which it appeared were as beautiful as those two singled out above from the *Suspiria* and the *Conversations*. "And which" in its numerous correct uses<sup>1</sup> may appear as a spondee, an iamb, or perhaps sometimes a pyrrhic, or as constituting longer feet which require such syllables, and be welcome anywhere in any sentence, plain or splendid. But misused, it spoils the beauty of what might otherwise be a triumph of Mercury and Apollo working together. "Dilapidated" is in itself a positively fine dochmiac, fit for the greatest occasions: yet we saw what an unlucky taint of association made it do in a fine passage—one in close neighbourhood to the finest. "Individual" is good, and indeed necessary, in more than one sense, as misused for "person" it is a silly abomination.

Now in this respect I should, as I have already said, heartily agree with Sir Henry Craik that nineteenth-century (or at least early nineteenth-century) prose is inferior to eighteenth, and that part at least of the reason is that there is so much more of it, that it has been so much more hastily written, and that the education of the persons writing it has been progressively deteriorating. But something must perhaps be added as to the character of the best examples of these plain styles. They all look easy enough, but either they are terribly hard, or they require some special gift that very few people possess. What style has fewer ostensible tricks, involves less recourse to recondite materials, than Dryden's? Who has equalled it? For an entire century some—most, perhaps—of the cleverest writers of English tried to write like Addison. How did they succeed? But this later "standard style" is the most puzzling of all. Southey's was and is the object of an admiration which has never, in competent persons, been affected by private grudges, political differences, dislike of what is called his Pharisaism, want of interest in his subjects, any one of the innumerable extra-literary agencies which affect judgment. Have

<sup>1</sup> Much more numerous than the grammar books seem to think, by the way.

you ever tried to analyse it? I have, again and again, and have failed completely to get any closer than generalities, mostly negative. You can see easily enough what he does *not* do, you can appreciate the result of what he does, but the rest "goes out into mystery"

It is, however, necessary, and should be not unprofitable, to take examples of the principal prose-writers of a general kind who established themselves as craftsmasters, before the influence of De Quincey and Landor, reinforced by the mighty flood of Mr Ruskin's prose picture-symphonies, drew, and swept along with it or before it, almost all those writers who aimed at elaborate prose. They will be selected partly because of their undoubted greatness, partly because some have thought them great, chiefly because they illustrate the standard style in various ways. They will show it, now maintaining its position, now degenerating into rhetoric without rhetorical beauty, now attaining that beauty either by sheer expertness in the use of its own means or (a new thing to which especial attention may be invited) by playing the Israelite to the purely rhythmical style's Egyptian, and borrowing jewels of silver and jewels of gold, here and there, to adorn a body which is in general character and constitution only moderately rhythmical. Some of them will be only partially scanned, or not scanned at all, so as to bring out, as it were by illustration or diagram, these differences of character to the eye as well as to the ear.

We may start, by a partial retrogression, with a passage from Coleridge where, it will be seen, he has got rid of the "Surinam toad" character, and has remembered something of his earlier cunning<sup>1</sup> and inspiration as shown in the *Anima Poetae* fragments. But, as will also be seen at once, it lies, in scheme of rhythmical composition, between the purely polyphonic and the style of oratorical balance. The scanned and unscanned parts, on

<sup>1</sup> That he did not remember more was perhaps due to that "blighting commonsense" which has been surprisingly discovered, in him and other nineteenth century writers, as opposed to the "imaginative understanding" of the twentieth

the principle just mentioned, should show this better than comment in detail. There are fragments of definite harmonic quality in the passages left unscanned, and I have italicised them for the reader to scan, if he likes. But the general principle of their context is not much beyond the standard balance and the occasional emphasis of the end<sup>1</sup>

The first range of hills that encircles the scanty vale of human life is the horizon for the majority of its inhabitants. On its ridges | the common | sun | is born | and departs | From them | the stars | rise, | and touching them | they vanish. By the many, even this range, the natural limit and bulwark of the vale, is but imperfectly known. *Its higher ascents are too often hidden by mists and clouds from uncultivated swamps, which few have courage or curiosity to penetrate. To the multitude below these vapours appear, now as the dark haunts of terrific agents, on which none may intrude with impunity, and now all aglow with colours not their own, they are gazed at as the splendid palaces of happiness and power.* But in all ages | there have been a few, | who, | measuring | and sounding | the rivers | of the vale | at the feet | of their furthest | inaccessible | falls, | have learned | that the sources | must be far | higher | and far inward, | a few, | who, even | in the

<sup>1</sup> In printing this extract from Coleridge, I have ventured on a slight infidelity to the text which I trust this note will excuse. He seems to have italicised (at any rate the printed text does so) the words "its," "them," "them" in the second sentence. It was a common habit with him, and it was, perhaps, caught from him by De Quincey, whose employment of the italic in his most ambitious passages is copious. Now, with some diffidence, I am still bold enough to think this wrong. I do not, as some lofty persons do, despise the italic altogether as a "refuge of the forcible feeble," or as feminine and indeed governessy. I think that it is quite admissible, and very useful, in what De Quincey himself called "the literature of knowledge"—in exposition, in argument, and the like. It undoubtedly assists not so very feeble folk who read, and I am by no means sure that it indicates feebleness in those who write. At any rate, I think it is legitimate for me and for my house—a convenient porter's knot for those who do porter's work, a pointing stick for those who serve the blackboard. But in the higher realms of the "literature of power" italics seem to me out of place and annoying, and, in deliberately and elaborate rhythmical prose, not merely a superfluity, but a confession of failure or, least, of self diffidence. The rhythm, if it is real, will supply the required emphasis unfaillingly, while the italic signpost (and something more) over emphasises (*non de me fabula*), and invites that sovereign mistake of paying too much attention to a single syllable which we have so often noticed

level | streams, | have detected | elements, | which neither | the vale  
 itself | nor the surrounding | mountains | contained | or could  
 supply | How and whence to these thoughts, these strong prob-  
 abilities, the ascertaining vision, the intuitive knowledge may finally  
 supervene, can be learnt only by the fact

On the other hand, the next piece to be given, from Jeffrey, is wholly "standard," but a standard of the less harmonious kind, snip-snappy, and what has been reprehensibly denominated "clatteraceous," not a little resembling the manner of Jeffrey's most celebrated contributor Rhythmical, no less than logical, criticism puts a very low value on the obvious trick of "less this than that, less that than t'other", and, to borrow its own way of writing, though the passage cannot be pronounced to be without affectation, it may certainly be said to be without any eminent grace

Of his style, it has been usual to speak with great, and, we think, exaggerated praise. It is less mellow than Dryden's, less elegant than Pope's or Addison's, less noble than Lord Bolingbroke's, and utterly without the glow and loftiness which belonged to our earlier masters. It is radically a low and homely style, without grace and without affectation, and chiefly remarkable for a great choice and profusion of common words and expressions. Other writers who have used a plain and direct style have been for the most part jejune and limited in their diction, and generally give us an impression of the poverty as well as the tameness of their language, but Swift, without ever trespassing into figured or poetical expressions, or ever employing a word that can be called fine or pedantic, has a prodigious variety of good set phrases always at his command, and displays a sort of homely richness, like the plenty of an old English dinner, or the wardrobe of a wealthy burgess. This taste for the plain and substantial was fatal to his poetry, which subsists not on such elements, but was in the highest degree favourable to the effect of his humour, very much of which depends on the imposing gravity with which it is delivered, and on the various turns and heightenings it may receive from a rapidly shifting and always appropriate expression.

If the words used above seem too harsh, let a few others of explanation, which, without retracting or hedging, may soften the apparent injustice, be added

before we pass to an example decidedly less favourable still, which will itself, to some extent, rehabilitate by comparison this Little Master of "the narrow English." We have nothing to do with the substance of the criticism, though those who insist on the indissolubleness of form and meaning might make not a bad innings out of that. The point to which I wish to draw attention is the fatiguing and monotonous zigzag of advance and retreat—the omnipresence and almost omnipotence of the "but," which enables the writer, as if with the see-saw of a folding-machine, to supply himself with constant parallel pairs of measured-off deliverances. The sentences do not indeed jar, the meaning is clearly enough conveyed nobody can call it *bad* English. If you take an English composition-book or an American "Manual of Rhetoric," I daresay you will not be able to find a fault in it with the help of the most exacting of either class. But it has no juice, no sap, no unction, and therefore (with a rapid but not illegitimate shift of category), it has no rhythm beyond mere pendulum work.

Yet, as was said above, Jeffrey by no means gave the worst examples of this style. Read the following

The elements of Euclid, gentlemen, have raised for their author a deathless monument of fame. For two thousand years they have maintained their superiority in the schools, and been received as the most appropriate introduction to geometry. It is one of the few books which elevate our respect for the genius of antiquity. It has survived the wreck of ages. It had its days of adversity and disgrace in the dark period of ignorance and superstition, when everything valuable in the literature of antiquity was buried in the dust and solitude of cloisters, and the still voice of truth was drowned in the jargon of a loud and disputatious theology. But it has been destined to reappear in all its ancient splendour. We ascribe not, indeed, so high a character to it because of its antiquity, but why be carried away by the rashness of innovation? why pour an indiscriminate contempt on systems and opinions because they are old? Truth is confined to no age and to no country. Its voice has been heard in the Temple of Egypt, as well as in the European University. It has darted its light athwart the gloom of antiquity, as well as given a new splendour to the illumination of modern times. We have witnessed the feuds of political innovation—the cruelty and murder which have marked the progress of its

destructive career Let us also tremble at the heedless spirit of reform which the confidence of a misguided enthusiasm may attempt in the principles and investigations of philosophy What would have been the present degradation of science had the spirit of each generation been that of contempt for the labours and investigations of its ancestry? Science would exist in a state of perpetual infancy Its abortive tendencies to improvement would expire with the short-lived labours of individuals, and the extinction of every new race would again involve the world in the gloom of ignorance Let us tremble to think that it would require the production of a new miracle to restore the forgotten discoveries of Newton

Now that is the work of Thomas Chalmers, who, though now a good deal forgotten everywhere, even in Scotland, and never much read by Englishmen in the narrow sense, has often had high praise, and was, for instance, regarded by my late friend and predecessor, Professor Masson, as worthy of mention, even with the greatest of all his Christian namesakes—with Browne himself,—as a master of ornate style To me, I confess, it seems a mere beating of the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot, with a beater of material as dull as the object beaten is dissonant The general sense-effect goes perilously near to that burlesque danger of the style which Sydney Smith brought out so admirably in respect to Mackintosh,<sup>1</sup> and I say this with no failure to honour Euclid, whom, in dead opposition, I believe, to modern views, I regard as supplying, with his native Greek, the two best subjects for a boy's education Nor am I thinking of its "piffle" about "dark periods of ignorance and superstition," any more than I am bribed by its "trembling at the heedless spirit of reform" My point is the idle and mechanical tick-tack of its antithesis, the wooden clatter of its stump-ended and staccato clause-balance Johnson without his sinews and marrow, Gibbon without his undulating harmony, Burke with his store of phrase and image and argument withered like the herbs that they sell in paper bags—these are what it makes me think of And its general manner is what Sir Henry Craik (though I do not know that he would agree with me in my selection of example) has, to my

<sup>1</sup> *V sup* p 271

thinking, justly called "the worthless husks of a formal literary tradition"<sup>1</sup>

Hazlitt is, I believe, often thought of—he has, at any rate, sometimes been described—as a rather careless

<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that Chalmers's "assistant," Edward Irving, caught a great deal of this pompous style from his chief. He informed, or inflated, it, of course, with something more, and his effect as an orator has the weightiest vouchers. In fact, I could add that of my own father, who as a young man had heard Irving preach, to the printed testimonies of the greatest men of letters of 1820-1830. But when one *reads* him, the case is altered. I need hardly comment much on the following mingle mangle of bad blank verse, bad sham Burke, bungled Biblical phrase, tags of hackneyed quotation, clumsily peppered *'eths*, and everywhere cheap and vulgar rhetoric, profaning the Immensities

"Imagination cowers her wing, unable || to fetch the compass of the ideal scene || The great white throne descending out of Heaven, || guarded and begirt with the principalities and powers thereof,—|| the awful presence at whose sight the Heavens || and the earth flee away, and no place for them is found,—the shaking of the mother elements of nature || and the commotion of the hoary deep || to render up their long dissolved dead,—|| the rushing to gether || of quickened men upon all the winds of Heaven || down to the centre || where the Judge sitteth on his blazing throne || To give form and figure and utterance to the mere circumstantial pomp of such a scene no imagination availeth || Nor doth the understanding labour less ||

"The Archangel with the trump of God, riding sublime in the midst of Heaven, and sending through the widest dominions of death and the grave that sharp summons which divideth the solid earth, and || rings through the caverns of the hollow deep, || piercing the dull cold ear of death and the grave with the knell of their departed reign, || the reign of death, the sprouting of the grave || with the vitality of the reign || of life, the second birth of living things, || the reunion of body and soul, the one from unconscious sleep, the other from apprehensive and unquiet abodes, the congregation of all generations over whom the stream of time hath swept—this outstretches my understanding no less than the material imagery confuses my imagination || And when I bring the picture to my heart || its feelings are overwhelmed, when I fancy this quick and conscious frame one instant reawakened, the next reinvested, the next summoned || before the face of the Almighty Judge, || now begotten, now sifted through every secret corner, my poor soul possessed with the memory of its misdeeds, submitted to the scorching eye of my Maker, my fate depending upon his lips, my everlasting changeless fate, I shriek [shrink?] and shiver with mortal apprehension, and when I fancy the myriads || of men all standing thus explored and known, || I seem to hear their shiverings like the aspen leaves in the still evenings of autumn || Pale fear possesseth every countenance, || and blank conviction every quaking heart || They stand like men upon the perilous edge || of battle, withholden from speech and pinched for breath through excess of struggling emotions—shame, remorse, mortal apprehension, and trembling hope"

One must needs mutter, *Tuba mirum spargens sonum*, and the rest, for some time, to reconsecrate the sullied magnificence of the scene. But, from our special side, remember to compare *this* blank verse with Ruskin's, note the failure to make any symphony even of such rhythmical fragments as there are, and own the terrible possibilities of ornate style blundered and cancantered



writer, and it is certainly improbable that he ever revised much. His often-mentioned and sometimes reviled habit of quotation, moreover, to some extent justifies Landor's, in other respects, excessive objection to quotation generally, after a fashion which may not have struck those who have not accustomed themselves to the rhythmical point of view<sup>1</sup>. But much of his more general and abstract criticism (such as most of his survey of poetry in general) is an admirable "standard" example, sinewy, not inharmonious, and altogether a fit vehicle for that, in some ways, unmatched critical faculty of his. And he also and often wrote in the more elaborately imaginative and rhythmical way, as in these two famous passages, the description of his haunts at Winterslow in the "Farewell to Essay-writing," and the curious indignant agony—lost love forcing truth and praise from present hatred—of the reference to Coleridge which closes the *English Poets*, as "Poetry in General" had opened it.

In this hope, while "fields are dark and ways are mire," I follow the same direction to a neighbouring wood, where, having gained the dry, level greensward, I can see way for a mile before me, closed in on each side by copsewood, and ending in a point of light more or less brilliant, as the day is bright or cloudy. What a walk | is this | to me ! | I have no need | of book | or companion—| the days, | the hours, | the thoughts | of my youth | are at my side, | and blend | with the air | that fans | my cheek | Here | I can saunter | for hours, | bending | my eye | forward, | stopping | and turning | to look back, | thinking | to strike off | into some | less trodden | path, | yet hesitating | to quit | the one | I am in, | afraid | to snap | the brittle | threads | of memory | I remark | the shining | trunks | and slender | branches | of the birch trees, | waving | in the idle | breeze, | or a pheasant | springs up | on whirring | wing, | or I recall | the spot | where I once found | a wood-pigeon | at the foot |

<sup>1</sup> Because it is almost certain that (unless it is chosen with special attention to the point, which can seldom be possible) the rhythm of the quotation will be different from that of the context.

of a tree | weltering | in its gore, | and think | how many | seasons |  
 have flown | since "it left its little life in air" | Dates, | names, |  
 faces | come back— | to what purpose? | Or why | think of them |  
 now? | Or rather | why | not think of them | oftener? | We walk |  
 through life | as through | a narrow | path, | with a thin | curtain |  
 drawn | around it, | behind | are ranged | rich portraits, | airy harps |  
 are strung— | yet we will not | stretch forth | our hands | and lift  
 aside | the veil, | to catch | the glimpses of the one | or sweep |  
 the chords | of the other | As | in a theatre | when the old-  
 fashioned | green curtain | drew up, | groups of figures, | fantastic |  
 dresses, | laughing | faces, | rich banquets, | stately columns, |  
 gleaming vistas | appeared beyond, | so | we have only | at any  
 time | to "peep through the blanket of the past," | to possess our-  
 selves | at once | of all | that has regaled | our senses, | that is  
 stored up | in our memory, | that has struck | our fancy, | that has  
 pierced | our hearts — | yet to all this | we are | indifferent, | in-  
 sensible, | and seem intent | only | on the present | vexation, | the  
 future | disappointment

But I may say of him here, that he is the only person I ever  
 knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius. He is the  
 only person from whom I ever learnt anything. There is only  
 one thing he could learn from me in return, but *that* he has not.  
 He was the first | poet | I ever | knew | His genius | at that  
 time | had angelic | wings, | and fed | on manna | He talked on |  
 for ever | His thoughts | did not seem | to come | with labour |  
 and effort, | but as if borne | on the gusts | of genius, | and as  
 if | the wings of his | imagination | lifted him | from off | his feet |  
 His voice | rolled | on the ear | like the pealing | organ, | and its  
 sound | alone | was the music | of thought | His mind | was  
 clothed | with wings, | and raised | on them, | he lifted | philosophy |

to heavēn | In his descriptions, | you then saw | the progress | of  
human | happiness | and liberty | in bright | and never ending |  
succession, | like the steps | of Jacob's | Ladder, | with airy | shapes |  
ascending | and descending, | and with the voice | of God | at the  
top | of the ladder | And shall I, | who heard him | then, | listen  
to him | now? | Not I! | That spell | is broken, that time |  
is gone for ever, | that voice | is heard | no more, | but still | the  
recollection | comes rushing by | with thoughts | of long past years, |  
and rings | in my ears | with never-dying | sound

Neither of these is faultless. The first is not improved, on the principle given above, by the quotations or by the hackneyed, though not definitely quoted, "weltering in its gore." "We walk through life as through a narrow path" is a too definite blank verse opening a new period, and so unmistakable. In the second, the repetition of "genius" in the early lines had been better avoided, and the juxtaposition of "years" and "ears" towards the end is a most unlucky oversight—or why should we not say "over-sound"? But, on the whole, they make a singularly beautiful pair, and I think it is not fanciful to discern a rather curious similarity in the general principles of their rhythm. It will be noticed in my scansion, that, though pæons and dochmiacs are not banished, shorter feet distinctly predominate, and there is a great deal of simple iamb, trochee, and spondee. Not merely the blank verse, but divers other intrinsically and separately metrical fragments may be discerned, such as the opening—

What a walk | is this | to me!

which has a strange Browningsque ring about it, as if James Lee's wife, on landing at Weymouth or Southampton from the deck of the Brittany steamer, where we last hear her speak, had gone on to Wiltshire and continued the poem there in no different key.<sup>1</sup> But you will

<sup>1</sup> That of

"Oh! | what a dawn | of day!  
How the March | sun feels | like May," etc

never find these tags of rhythm illicitly joining themselves to others and making actual metre the prose dominant reigns supreme I do not think Hazlitt was consciously aiming at anything like De Quincey's or Landor's style In 1818 indeed, when the Coleridge piece was written, he could know nothing of either but Landor's verse But to whatsoever he aspired, he attained this

When we come to Lamb, we come to one of the exceptions That he could have written paragraphs—that he did write sentences—exquisitely rhythmical, is certain But it was scarcely ever his humour to do the first, and not often to do the second His faithful and constant following of the Elizabethans in the wide sense (to say that he was not “a sedulous ape” of Browne and Burton and Fuller is, I think, a mistake) must, to some extent, have interfered with any such production, by distracting his view But the very certainty and success with which he assimilated the products of this imitation, and combined them with that of others, especially Sterne, proved this still more His style is a perfectly achieved *conglomerate*, the particles conglomerated being perceptible, but indissolubly united, and in fact unified, by the mortar of his own idiosyncrasy Yet in actual continuity of sound, as distinguished from sense, the whole is too much broken up to achieve the highest rhythmical results They are, it may be said, not wanted, and I heartily agree But there are some excellent people who, when you say that something is not somewhere, resent the statement, as if “and it ought to be” were implied The uniquely broken bits of Lamb's composition would be ill exchanged for fresh examples of a continuous harmony which we can find elsewhere In the middle style, moreover—that which aims at and achieves concinnity of rhythm without going higher,—he was, in his less fantastic moods, an absolutely consummate master There is nobody like him (unless it be Goldsmith) between Addison and Thackeray, and I do not myself care to place the four in order of merit

Leigh Hunt, on the other hand—much Lamb's inferior

in this way, and incapable of the other, not able anywhere to reach the excellence of Hazlitt's rarer moods as exemplified above, or the serried vigour of his more ordinary argumentative passages, here, as in all ways, a slightly vulgarised companion to both of them—nevertheless was no contemptible master of this middle style, and could at times go beyond it. The following version of the "Daughter of Hippocrates" story, though scarcely worth scanning, except at the close, is worth reading throughout, with attention to rhythm, to show how near it approaches to the test, and it has the additional interest of contrasting with Mandeville's version,<sup>1</sup> at the very beginning of English prose in the full sense of the term. It has further to be said, in Hunt's favour, that though he was certainly, in a sense, what he has been called, "the father of all such as *penny-a-line*," he never descended to the slovenliness of which, with tawdriness as a twin-daughter, penny-a-lining may too justly be said to have been the parent. His prose is even free from the flaccidity and the running-at-the-mouth which too often distinguish his verse, and if he did not always write as he writes in the following passage, your ear may expect something not very far inferior in a reasonably continued reading of him.

In the time of the Norman reign in Sicily, a vessel bound from that island for Smyrna was driven by a westerly wind upon the island of Cos. The crew did not know where they were, though they had often visited the island, for the trading towns lay in other quarters, and they saw nothing before them but woods and solitudes. They found, however, a comfortable harbour, and the wind having fallen in the night, they went on shore next morning for water. The country proved as solitary as they thought it, which was the more extraordinary, inasmuch as it was very luxuriant, full of wild figs and grapes, with a rich uneven ground, and stocked with goats and other animals, who fled whenever they appeared. The bees were remarkably numerous, so that the wild honey, fruits, and delicious water, especially one spring which fell into a beautiful marble basin, made them more and more wonder, at every step, that they could see no human inhabitants.

Thus idling about and wondering, stretching themselves now and

---

<sup>1</sup> *V sup* pp 64, 65

then among the wild thyme and grass, and now getting up to look at some specially fertile place which another called them to see, and which they thought might be turned to fine trading purpose, they came upon a mound covered with trees, which looked into a flat, wide lawn of rank grass, with a house at the end of it. They crept nearer towards the house along the mound, still continuing among the trees, for fear they were trespassing at last upon some body's property. It had a large garden wall at the back, as much covered with ivy as if it had been built of it. Fruit-trees looked over the wall with an unpruned thickness, and neither at the back nor front of the house were there any signs of humanity. It was an ancient marble building, where glass was not to be expected in the windows, but it was much dilapidated, and the grass grew up over the steps. They listened | āgām | and āgām, | but nothing | was to be heard | like a sound | of men, | nor scarcely | of anything | else | There was an intense | noonday | silence | Only | the hares | made a rustling | noise | as they ran | about the long | hiding | grass | The house | looked | like the tomb | of human | nature | amidst | the vitality | of earth.

There are few authors to whom it is more interesting to apply the tests and methods of our present enquiry than to the two chief prose writers of the mid-nineteenth century, Carlyle and Macaulay. It is true that the changes of popular taste and interest, which have perhaps made such an enquiry less unpalatable in itself to readers than it would have been then, have also ousted both from their old pride of place, and so have made it less interesting as applying to them. But once more, these changes, except as matter of record, are as nothing to history.

The contrast—still almost startling even to those to whom it has long been familiar—between Carlyle's original style and his characteristic one has already been referred to, but it must necessarily be dealt with again, by illustration as well as by discussion, in the present place. In the first of the following extracts—which was also the first passage of the first original book that Carlyle published—there is absolutely nothing, in genus or species, to distinguish it from that standard style of which we have said so much, and the indiscernibility

applies to rhythm It avoids, with excellent success, the extremes, of dulness and of clatter, to which that style is liable, it is not so very far below the best, such as Southey's own, in that respect But it presents no specially *musical* characteristics, it does not invite scanning, or defy it, or make terms with it It is written ἐν ψιλοῖς λόγοις (to adopt one proposed sense of that disputed Aristotelianism) in simple prose—if anything ever was

Among the writers of the concluding part of the last century there is none more deserving of our notice than Friedrich Schiller Distinguished alike for the splendour of his intellectual faculties, and the elevation of his tastes and feelings, he has left behind him in his works a noble emblem of these great qualities, and the reputation which he thus enjoys, and has merited, excites our attention the more, on considering the circumstances under which it was acquired Schiller had peculiar difficulties to strive with, and his success has likewise been peculiar Much of his life was deformed by inquietude and disease, and it terminated at middle age, he composed in a language then scarcely settled into form, or admitted to a rank among the cultivated languages of Europe, yet his writings are remarkable for their extent and variety as well as their intrinsic excellence, and his own countrymen are not his only, or perhaps his principal, admirers It is difficult to collect or interpret the general voice, but the world, no less than Germany, seems already to have dignified him with the reputation of a classic, to have enrolled him among that select number whose works belong not wholly to any age or nation, but who, having instructed their own contemporaries, are claimed as instructors by the great family of mankind, and set apart for many centuries from the common oblivion which soon overtakes the mass of authors, as it does the mass of other men

A few years and this "tame villatic fowl" becomes a kind of roc

Often | also | could I see | the black Tempest | marching | in  
 anger | through the Distance, | round | some Schreckhorn, | as yet  
 grim-blue, | would the eddying | vapour | gather, | and there |  
 tumultuously | eddy, | and flow down | like a mad | witch's | hair, |  
 till, | after a space, | it vanished, | and in the clear | sunbeam, |  
 your Schreckhorn | stood smiling | grim-white, | for the vapour |

has held snow | How | thou fermentest and | elaboratest, | in thy  
 great | fermenting-vat | and laboratory<sup>1</sup> | of an Atmosphere, | of a  
 World, | O Nature !— | Or what is Nature ? | Ha ! | why | do I not  
 name thee | God ? | Art not thou | the “ Living | Garment | of God ” ? |  
 O Heavens, | is it in | very deed, | He, | then, | that ever | speaks |  
 through thee, | that lives | and loves | in thee, | that lives | and  
 loves | in me ?

Fore-shadows, | call them | rather | fore splendours, | of that  
 Truth, | and Beginning | of Truths, | fell | mysteriously | over | my  
 soul | Sweeter than Dayspring | to the shipwrecked | in Nova  
 Zembla, | ah, | like the mother's | voice | to her little | child | that  
 strays | bewildered, | weeping, | in unknown | tumults, | like soft |  
 streamings | of celestial | music | to my too | exasperated | heart, |  
 came that | Evangel | The Universe | is not dead | and de-  
 moniacal, | a charnel house | with spectres, | but godlike | and  
 my Father's !

How sharp and strange—if the reader has read these two passages in sequence, and either as things actually unfamiliar or with that temporary suspension of familiarity which is possible and almost necessary for the critic—must the contrast between them have been ! The *psalotes*, the “ bareness ” (in quite a decent and respectable sense) of the first is, in the second, clothed and broken, varied and accented, and finished with colour, being, by dint of these very changes, changed further from a bead-roll of not inharmoniously but evenly flowing syllables into symphonised rhythms—irregularly, indeed, and only eccentrically symphonic, but at any rate polyphonic in almost the highest degree. Only once, at the close of the first paragraph, does blank verse proffer a too officious and obvious aid to the transformation. And, just before

<sup>1</sup> The cluster of shorts here (for even “lab” is a “long” of the shortest) seems to require a “sixer”



it, the same dangerous reinforcement is deftly refused, for though

Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not

suggests actual verse, the following words—

Name thee God

throw the suggestion out<sup>1</sup> immediately By cunningly inserted epithets which arrest attention to particular syllabic values, by poetic inversions like “tumultuously eddy,” poetic synthesis of words in themselves indifferently poetic and prosaic like “mad witch’s hair,” the whole thing becomes rhythmical, and forces the rhythm, broken and irregular as it may be, upon the ear

It was no wonder that bewildered contemporaries called this “prose run mad,” that it seemed to them like the witch’s hair itself Yet some of them, such as the youthful Thackeray, could rally at once from the shock and perceive the beauty<sup>2</sup> The next generation, more fortunate, hardly felt the shock at all

In *Sartor* itself, and in *The French Revolution*, the method is seen at its height, nor perhaps ever afterwards (except in *Latter-day Pamphlets*) did he repeat the dose in equal strength For pleasure one might well reproduce and analyse all the famous things—the Bastille, the tragic agony of the Varennes disaster, the Tenth of August, the trial and death of the king, the retribution of Robespierre, a dozen others, but space forbids, nor does system require<sup>3</sup> His own method, quite infinite in variety of application, is comparatively simple in principle, though, as in other cases, uncommonly few people (I hardly know any except Patrick Alexander, though Trollope’s in *The Warden* is not bad) have succeeded in doing more in the way of imitation than burlesque of it It is at first

<sup>1</sup> It might return as that of an octosyllabic couplet, but not naturally

<sup>2</sup> “The real beauty which lurks among all these odd words and twisted sentences”—*Times* review of *The French Revolution* (“Oxford” edition of Thackeray’s *Works*, vol 1 p 72)

<sup>3</sup> Here, more perhaps than anywhere else, there may excusably be repetition of the warning that the rhythm of the authors selected cannot possibly be exhibited in anything like completeness To do so with Carlyle would require a monograph double the length of this chapter

sight a direct negation of the *general* principle of consummate rhythmical prose, which is the avoidance of breach or jaggedness. Carlyle's, on the contrary, seems to be a sort of ruined mosaic, a *pièce de cloisonné* enamel with the metal partitions wrenched, twisted, or wholly wanting. Yet when you have got the key-note of it, you find not merely that individual rhythm-fragments<sup>1</sup> are constantly of extreme beauty, but that, in some incomprehensible manner, they are united together by a master harmony that overspreads, underlies, pervades the apparent jangle. Every now and then, he will condescend to interpose somewhat clearer evidence, for a sentence or two, of pure prose tune, but the method on the whole is essentially Wagnerian, and a man might be excused for saying when he first heard *Tannhauser*, "How remarkably like Carlyle!"

Later—and even earlier in his *Essays*, where he had to consult the prejudices of editors and the feelings of readers, to some extent at any rate—he adopted a mode, mixed in yet another sense, which may be not badly illustrated by the following passage, and as to which I have adopted the plan of partial scansion, to contrast with the unscanned *Schiller* and the wholly scanned *Teufelsdröckh*. Here there is, on one side, a sort of *menstruum*, or general carrying basis, of standard plainness, while on the other you get a kind of business-like item-arranged cataloguing which reminds you, with a contrast as striking as the resemblance, of Macaulay. But in each case the whole is shot or spangled with picturesque and musical phrase, which makes it a thing as different from Macaulay's as from that of a merely "standardised" practitioner of the better class.

Illustration of this might be multiplied almost endlessly, but the following may suffice

For you fare | along, [ on some narrow | roadway, | through

<sup>1</sup> They often show something like what is called in verse *catalexis*, and require an unusual allowance of monosyllabic or half feet. While even by these I do not think that in his case the splitting of words, so often mentioned, is to be avoided.

ston̄y | lāb̄yr̄nth̄s, | h̄av̄ing | ov̄er your h̄ead, | on̄ this h̄and, | h̄uge |  
 rock | m̄ount̄ains, | and̄ | und̄er your f̄eet, | on̄ that, | thē | roar | of̄  
 m̄ount̄ain | cat̄aracts, | hor̄ror | of̄ bot̄tom̄less | ch̄as̄ms, | thē | v̄ery  
 winds | and̄ | ech̄oes | how̄ling on̄ you | in̄ an̄ al̄most | pr̄et̄ern̄at̄ural |  
 m̄anner Towering rock barriers rise sky high before you, and  
 behind you, and around you, intricate the outgate! The roadway  
 is narrow, footing none of the best Sharp turns there are, where  
 it will behove you to mind your paces, one false step, and you  
 will need no second, in the gloomy jaws of the abyss you vanish,  
 and the spectral winds howl requiem Somewhat better are the  
 suspension bridges, made of bamboo and leather, though they swing  
 like see saws, men are stationed with lassos, to gin you dexterously,  
 and fish you up from the torrent, if you trip there

Through this kind of country did San Martin march, straight  
 towards San Iago, to fight the Spaniards and deliver Chile For  
 ammunition waggons he had sorras, sledges, canoe-shaped boxes,  
 made of dried bull's hide His cannons were carried on the back  
 of mules, each cannon on two mules judiciously harnessed, on the  
 packsaddle of your foremost mule there rested with firm girths a  
 long strong pole, the other end of which, forked end, we suppose,  
 rested, with like girths, on the packsaddle of the hindmost mule,  
 your cannon was slung with leathern straps on this pole, and so  
 travelled, swaying and dangling, yet moderately secure In the  
 knapsack of each soldier was eight days' provender, dried beef  
 ground into snuff powder, with a modicum of pepper, and some  
 slight seasoning of biscuit or maize meal, store of onions, of garlic,  
 was not wanting, Paraguay tea could be boiled at eventide, by fire

of scrub bushes, or almost of rock lichens or dried mule dung No  
 farther | baḡgage | was̄ p̄erm̄itted, | each̄ sol̄dier | lay | at̄ night |  
 wrapped | in̄ his̄ p̄on̄cho, | with̄ his̄ kn̄apsack | for̄ pill̄ow, | und̄er |  
 thē can̄opy | of̄ heav̄en, | lul̄lab̄ied | bȳ hard | trav̄ail, | and̄ sunk |  
 soon̄ en̄ough | intō stead̄y | nose-m̄el̄od̄y, | intō | thē fool̄ish̄est | rough  
 col̄t dance | of̄ un̄im̄aḡin̄ablē Dreams | Had he not left much  
 behind him in the Pampas—mother, mistress, what not, and was

like to find somewhat if he ever got across to Chile living? What  
 an̄ ent̄ity, | one | of̄ thosē night | leagūers | of̄ San̄ Mar̄tin, | all̄ |  
 stead̄ily | sn̄oring | thēre | in̄ thē heart | of̄ thē And̄es, | und̄er | thē  
 et̄ernal | stars! | Way-worn sentries with difficulty keep themselves  
 awake, tired mules chew barley rations, or doze on three legs, the

feeble watch fire will hardly kindle a cigar, Cānōpūs | and the  
 Southern | Cross | glitter | down, | and all | snōres | steadily | begirt |  
 by granite | deserts, | looked on | by the cōn|stellations | in that  
 manner<sup>1</sup> |

Here "roar of mountain cataracts, horrors of bottomless chasms" arranges its contrasting foot-values—monosyllable, amphibrach, dactyl-cretic, trochee, pæon, monosyllable, trochee—as delicately as if it were De Quincey or Landor, Taylor or Browne<sup>1</sup> But presto<sup>1</sup> and the very woods and echoes howl at you "in an almost preternatural manner" possibly, but certainly in a very easy conversational style With a true dream-contradiction, the not-in-the-least-astonished soldiers find themselves "all steadily snoring in the heart of the Andes, under the eternal stars," and in the same way these stars themselves, Canopus and the Southern Cross, find themselves chosen from all the host of Heaven to glitter down on the intrusive and incongruous "snorers," because of the desirable combination of amphibrach, third pæon, and monosyllable

There is hardly a point in the whole range of possible literary criticism where the contrast between Carlyle and Macaulay is not amusing, but on most of these points this contrast is so obvious, not to say glaring, that it needs very little comment in detail In our department, perhaps because that department has had so few workers in it hitherto, a slight examination may not be profitless That, on first and indiscriminating hearing, the two are extraordinarily different needs no impressing, that before long a certain community in difference—the love of short and abruptly separated clauses and sentences—will appear, needs hardly more But this does not take us very far

Macaulay had, in fact, two styles, which he sometimes

<sup>1</sup> How interesting it is to think that there are persons "*with two ears erect*, and bearing the outward semblance of men," who would take this for a hexameter<sup>1</sup>

mixed, but also sometimes kept apart. The one was what he is most celebrated for, the true "Tom's snipsnap," illustrated in the second of the following extracts. It seems sometimes as if the writer has joined a secret and yet open society—the principle of which was to use no stops but full ones, with an occasional and grudging comma. The sentences come out like cartridges from a magazine, or packets of something unwholesome from one of the hideous erections on station-platforms. Sometimes the character is, as here, emphasised to the point of ludicrousness by arithmetical details (compare the passage from Carlyle, not dissimilar in subject, above given). These sentences, or sentencelets, are not exactly inharmonious in themselves, but they do not attempt harmony. You rush to the end of them, and it is the end-words alone that, on the old principle, (*v. sup.* on Hurd and Addison) seem to have received some care from the writer as to their rhythm.

The place | was worthy | of such | a trial | It was the great |  
 hall | of William | Rufus, | the hall | which had resounded | with  
 acclamations | at the inauguration | of thirty | kings, | the hall | which  
 had witnessed | the just | sentence | of Bacon | and the just |  
 absolution | of Somers, | the hall | where the eloquence | of Strafford |  
 had for a moment | awed | and melted | a victorious | party | inflamed |  
 with just | resentment, | the hall | where Charles | had confronted |  
 the High Court | of Justice | with the placid | courage which has  
 half | redeemed | his fame. Neither military nor civil pomp was  
 wanting. The avenues were lined with grenadiers. The streets  
 were kept clear by cavalry. The peers, robed in gold and ermine,  
 were marshalled by the heralds under Garter-King-at arms. The  
 judges in their vestments of state attended to give advice on points  
 of law. Near a hundred and seventy lords, three-fourths of the  
 Upper House as the Upper House then was, walked in solemn order  
 from their usual place of assembling to the tribunal. The junior  
 baron present led the way, George Eliott, Lord Heathfield, recently  
 ennobled for his memorable defence of Gibraltar against the fleets  
 and armies of France and Spain. The long procession was closed  
 by the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of the realm, by the great

dignitaries, and by the brothers and sons of the King Last of all came the Prince of Wales, conspicuous by his fine person and noble bearing The gray old walls were hung with scarlet The long galleries were crowded by an audience such as has rarely excited the fears or the emulation of an orator There were gathered together, from all parts of a great, free, enlightened, and prosperous empire, grace and female loveliness, wit and learning, the representatives of every science and of every art There were seated round the Queen the fair haired young daughters of the house of Brunswick There the Ambassadors of great Kings and Commonwealths gazed with admiration on a spectacle which no other country in the world could present There Siddons, in the prime of her majestic beauty, looked with emotion on a scene surpassing all the imitations of the stage There the historian of the Roman Empire thought of the days when Cicero pleaded the cause of Sicily against Verres, and when, before a senate which still retained some show of freedom, Tacitus thundered against the oppressor of Africa There were seen, side by side, the greatest painter and the greatest scholar of the age The spectacle had allured Reynolds from that easel which has preserved to us the thoughtful foreheads of so many writers and statesmen, and the sweet smiles of so many noble matrons It had induced Parr to suspend his labours in that dark and profound mine from which he had extracted a vast treasure of erudition, a treasure too often buried in the earth, too often paraded with injudicious and inelegant ostentation, but still precious, massive, and splendid There | appeared | the voluptuous | charms | of her | to whom the heir | of the throne | had in secret | plighted | his faith | There too was she, the beautiful mother of a beautiful race, the Saint Cecilia, whose delicate features, lighted up by love and music, art has rescued from the common decay There were the members of that brilliant society which quoted, | criticised, | and exchanged | repartees, under the rich peacock hangings of Mrs Montague And there | the ladies | whose lips, | more persuasive | than those | of Fox | himself, | had carried | the Westminster | election | against palace | and treasury, | shone | round Georgiana, | Duchess | of Devonshire <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some points in this are too obvious for comment, except perhaps in a note The pivotal, or rather spring board, effect of the repeated "there" is of course the chief I do not think "grenadiers" and "cavalry," even with the full benefit of "grenadiers," an ideal pair of clause tips in sound, but the picture to the eye—the motionless rows of peaked caps and the more restless figures of the horsemen—no doubt determined the choice

By this time July was far advanced, and the state of the city was, hour by hour, becoming more frightful. The number of the inhabitants had been thinned more by famine and disease than by the fire of the enemy. Yet that fire was sharper and more constant than ever. One of the gates was beaten in, one of the bastions was laid in ruins, but the breaches made by day were repaired by night with indefatigable activity. Every attack was still repelled. But the fighting men of the garrison were so much exhausted that they could scarcely keep their legs. Several of them, in the act of striking at the enemy, fell down from mere weakness. A very small quantity of grain remained, and was doled out by mouthfuls. The stock of salted hides was considerable, and by gnawing them the garrison appeased the rage of hunger. Dogs, fattened on the blood of the slain who lay unburied round the town, were luxuries which few could afford to purchase. The price of a whelp's paw was five shillings and sixpence. Nine horses were still alive, and but barely alive. They were so lean that little meat was likely to be found upon them. It was, however, determined to slaughter them for food. The people perished so fast that it was impossible for the survivors to perform the rights of sepulture. There was scarcely a cellar in which some corpse was not decaying. Such was the extremity of distress that the rats who came to feast in those hideous dens were eagerly hunted and greedily devoured. A small fish, caught in the river, was not to be purchased with money. The only price for which such a treasure could be obtained was some handfuls of oatmeal. Leprosies, such as strange and unwholesome diet engenders, made existence a constant torment. The whole city was poisoned by the stench exhaled from the bodies of the dead and of the half dead.

First were rolled on shore barrels containing six thousand bushels of meal. Then came great cheeses, casks of beef, flitches of bacon, kegs of butter, sacks of pease and biscuit, ankers of brandy. Not many hours before, half a pound of tallow and three quarters of a pound of salted hide had been weighed out with niggardly care to every fighting man. The ration which each now received was three pounds of flour, two pounds of beef, and a pint of pease. It is easy to imagine with what tears grace was said over the suppers of that evening. There was little sleep on either side of the wall. The bon

fires shone bright along the whole circuit of the ramparts The Irish guns continued to roar all night, and all night the bells of the rescued city made answer to the Irish guns with a peal of joyous defiance Through the three following days the batteries of the enemy continued to play But, on the third | night | flames | were seen | arising | from the camp, | and when the first | of August | dawned, | a line | of smoking ruins | marked | the site | lately | occupied by the huts | of the besiegers, | and the citizens | saw | far off | the long | column | of spikes | and standards | retreating | up the left bank | of the Foyle | towards Strabane <sup>1</sup>

The rhythm of the first extract is as different as possible from that of the second in the most obvious characteristics, less so, perhaps, on re-examination The writer is here, as often, evidently under the influence of Gibbon There is the same rotund allusiveness—"the historian of the Roman empire" has a double or treble appropriateness—and "the voluptuous charms of her to whom the heir of the throne had in secret plighted his faith" is Gibbon, almost *premier choix*, for "Mrs Fitzherbert" The proper names, where used, are introduced with special attention to sound, and the sentences are varied in length, with special attention to sound likewise It will probably depend very much on individual taste whether the full Gibbonian roll—the flux and reflux of that majestic wave that kept time with the revolutions of more than a millennium—is held to have been attained or not But at any rate here is good standard style, supercharged in rhythm with something of reversion to Burke, and even to Bolingbroke, for strongly rhetorical effect, not irreminiscent of Johnson himself, as in the phrases about the pinchbeck Johnson, Dr Parr,<sup>2</sup> but certainly reminding

<sup>1</sup> I have thought it well to indicate Macaulay's fancy for trochaic endings He contrasts them, of course, with some monosyllables and other feet generally, and avoids them at the paragraph close But the staccato style undoubtedly invites them, and so, in very modern work, gives a throw back to the most ancient

<sup>2</sup> Speaking of Parr, I have been reminded, and ought to have needed no reminder, of the shorthand description of his style given by that piercer of



one most of the third raiser of style in the eighteenth century

I have elsewhere protested<sup>1</sup> against the undervaluation of Macaulay's style, and may, therefore, claim freedom from prejudice if I say that it cannot be ranked very high from our present point of view. Even the old simple test—want of variety—would suffice to condemn it, for, with the exception of the difference of its two kinds, noted above, there is nothing to be hoped for, and nothing to be found, but the monotonous tick-tack and snip-snap on the one hand, and the not much less monotonous balance or undulation (itself something of an amplification of this snip-snap) on the other. For purposes of exposition, and (less luckily) for purposes of persuasion with the ordinary reader, it has exceedingly high qualifications. Wherever *dolus non latet* in directions political and other, wherever it is desirable that a tolerably intelligent but not extraordinarily acute or attentive reader should receive a fair sweeping view of a multitude of more or less complicated details, there is hardly any style which surpasses it "for use." It may even give, to a somewhat blunt but not quite deaf ear, a pleasure resembling, in prose, that which the snip-snap or amplified couplets of the eighteenth century used to give to ears of the same kind in verse. Indeed, Macaulay stands to eighteenth-century verse (in his prose, *not* his verse) much as Landor and De Quincey and Ruskin do to nineteenth. But the din and clatter of his method is certainly not what you want, when the ear is voluptuously inclined and artistically trained. In the great examples which have been given above, and will be given below, nothing repeats anything else—the individual notes, and the polyphonic groupings of words and word-batches, are as unlike as the productions of Nature, while Macaulay's are as like as the productions of machinery.

Those styles in which the somewhat toneless and

---

windbags, "the Canon Schidnischmidt" "And a great many other things without a great many other things" It may go with a less pointed remark of my own on Jeffrey's (*v. sup.* p. 355)

<sup>1</sup> *Corrected Impressions* (London, 1895), p. 96

colourless rhythm of the standard is chequered and flushed by a certain dose of the more elaborately rhythmical, increase in number and interest as we go through the century. Its favourite and characteristic production, the novel, encourages them, and the influence of the Time-Spirit accentuates and enforces the encouragement. Except in passages of description, or in addresses to the reader, such as those to which the immeasurable short-sightedness of certain critics objects in Thackeray, the novelist can hardly exceed the rhythm of conversation, or that of the graver or lighter standard style, without running the risk of being irksome to his readers, as a certain famous French saying has it. Yet most great novelists have had rhythmical complexions—"favours" in the old sense—more or less their own, after fashions which should be very well known to their readers, but which would be difficult to illustrate satisfactorily here, unless we could give a chapter, and a very long one, to them. Thus Miss Austen has that ironic "fingering" of the standard which induces some deeply-to-be-commiserated persons to call her "stilted."

You would have told me that we seemed born for each other, or some nonsense of that kind, which would have distressed me beyond conception, my cheeks would have been as red as your roses, I would not have had you by for the world—

where the decent propriety of the expression, the manifest hypocrisy of the speaker, and the ironic touches of the artist, are all inextricably married together. Or one might take that apex and coronal, or coronalled apex, of Peacock's piercing crispness, the logic of Seithenyn on life and death.

They have not made it known to me, for the best of all reasons, that one can only know the truth. For if that which we think we know is not truth, it is something which we do not know. A man cannot know his own death. For while he knows anything he is alive, at least I never heard of a dead man who knew anything, or pretended to know anything—if he had so pretended, I should have told him to his face that he was no dead man.

We cannot, of course, cast the net very widely for examples, but Peacock himself, Disraeli, Dickens, and

Thackeray may perhaps suffice. The selection given from Lord Beaconsfield will probably make it unnecessary to give any from the first Lord Lytton, for if there was no love lost between the two men, it was perhaps in part because the two styles, at their most elaborate, were very close together. And though the author of *Conningsby* and *Lothair* had nothing like the range, and at no part of his range anything like<sup>1</sup> the occasional ease and finish, of the author of *Pelham* and *Kenelm Chillingly*, the needs of the present occasion will, I think, be satisfied with the proposed allotment.

That part of Peacock's writing which is most delectable to true Peacockians—may the shadow and the glitter of body and tail never be less for them!—would serve us little for illustration. The admirable crispness of its dialogue, and the occasional sharp outline of its comment, have rhythm of their own no doubt, as, it has been remarked, everything has, but it is scarcely of the kind we are discussing, and is rather to be perceived than analysed. This kind may be illustrated as follows.

Miss Susannah often wandered among the mountains alone, even to some distance from the farm-house. Sometimes she descended into the bottom of the dingles, to the black rocky beds of the torrents, and dreamed away hours at the feet of the cataracts. One spot in particular, from which she had at first shrunk with terror, became by degrees her favourite haunt. A path turning and returning at acute angles, led down a steep wood covered slope to the edge of a chasm, where a pool, or resting place of a torrent, lay far below. A cataract fell in a single sheet into the pool, the pool | boiled | and bubbled | at the base | of the fall, | but through the greater | part | of its extent | lay calm, | deep, | and black, | as

---

<sup>1</sup> More especially he had nothing like the almost classical concentration, and freedom from redundancy, which Bulwer could display when he too seldom chose, as in the magnificent ghost story which is his *Wandering Willie's Tale*, and the recognition of which, like the recognition of that, used to be an esoteric touchstone of criticism long before the vulgar knew of it. But it so happens that this concerns us less than his "Corinthian" indulgences. See remarks on Peacock in the text. (Examples or discussions of the second great group of Victorian novelists, from the Brontës onward, will be found later.)

if | the cataract | had plunged | through it | to an un|im|ag|in|a|ble |  
 depth | without | disturbing | its eternal | repose | At the opposite  
 extremity of the pool, the rocks almost met at their summits, the  
 trees of the opposite banks intermingled their leaves, and another  
 cataract plunged from the pool into a chasm on which the sunbeams  
 never gleamed. High above, on both sides, the steep woody slopes  
 of the dingle soared into the sky, and from a fissure in the rock,  
 on which the little path terminated, a single gnarled and twisted oak  
 stretched itself over the pool, forming a fork with its boughs at a  
 short distance from the rock. Miss Susannah often sat on the  
 rock, with her feet resting on this tree. In time, she made her seat  
 on the tree itself, with her feet hanging over the abyss, and at  
 length she accustomed herself to lie upon its trunk, with her side  
 on the mossy bole of the fork, and an arm round one of the branches.  
 From this position a portion of the sky and the woods was reflected  
 in the pool, which from its bank was but a mass of darkness. The  
 first time she reclined in this manner, her heart beat audibly, in  
 time, she lay down as calmly as on the mountain heather. The  
 perception of the sublime was probably heightened by an inter  
 mingled sense of danger, and perhaps that indifference to life,  
 which early disappointment forces upon sensitive minds, was  
 necessary to the first experiment. There was, in the novelty and  
 strangeness of the position, an excitement which never wholly  
 passed away, but which became gradually subordinate to the  
 influence, at once tranquillising and elevating, of the mingled eternity  
 of motion, sound, and solitude.

This is "standard" freed from over-rhetorical tendency,  
 and not intending rhythm greatly, but achieving it  
 sufficiently<sup>1</sup>. It is "medium-rhythmed"

If, on the contrary, any "gent," reversing the wishes  
 of him whom Mr Punch's waiter so cruelly complied  
 with, wants, not the "lighter and drier vintage" of  
*Melincourt* or *Elphin*, but a wine, not merely full of body,  
 but *mousseux* with rhetoric, he should surely be suited  
 here.

Favoured by nature and by nature's God, we produced the  
 lyre of David, we gave you Isaiah and Ezekiel, they are our  
 Olynthians, our Philippics. Favoured by nature we still remain,  
 but in exact proportion as we have been favoured by nature we  
 have been persecuted by man. After a thousand struggles, after  
 acts of heroic courage that Rome has never equalled, deeds of

<sup>1</sup> I think Macaulay had read Peacock, different as were their spirits, and I  
 could produce at least one unmistakable parallel passage

divine patriotism that Athens and Sparta and Carthage have never excelled, we have endured fifteen hundred years of supernatural slavery, during which every device that can degrade or destroy man has been the destiny that we have sustained and baffled. The Hebrew child has entered adolescence only to learn that he was the pariah of that ungrateful Europe that owes to him the best part of its laws, a fine portion of its literature, all its religion. Great poets require a public, we have been content with the immortal melodies that we sung more than two thousand years ago by the waters of Babylon and wept. They record our triumphs, they solace our affliction. Great orators are the creatures of popular assemblies, we were permitted only by stealth to meet even in our temples. And as for great writers, the catalogue is not blank. What are all the schoolmen, Aquinas himself, to Maimonides? And as for modern philosophy, all springs from Spinoza.

But the passionate | and creative | genius, | that is the nearest |  
link | to divinity, | and which no human | tyranny | can destroy, |  
though | it can divert it, | that should have stirred | the heart | of  
nations | by its inspired | sympathy, | or governed | senates | by its  
burning | eloquence, | has found | a medium | for its expression, |  
to which, | in spite of | your prejudices | and your evil | passions, |  
you have been obliged | to bow | The ear, | the voice, | the  
fancy | teeming | with combinations, | the imagination<sup>1</sup> | fervent |  
with picture | and emotion, | that came | from Caucasus, | and  
which | we have preserved | unpolluted, | have endowed us | with  
almost | the exclusive | privilege | of music, | that science | of  
harmonious | sounds, | which the ancients | recognised | as most |  
divine, | and deified | in the person of | their most beautiful |  
creation. I speak not of the past, though were I to enter into  
the history of the lords of melody, you would find it the annals of  
Hebrew genius. But at this moment even, musical Europe is ours.  
There is not a company of singers, not an orchestra in a single  
capital, that is not crowded with our children under the feigned  
names which they adopt to conciliate the dark aversion which your  
posterity will some day disclaim with shame and disgust. Almost  
every great composer, skilled musician, almost every voice that  
ravishes you with its transporting strains, springs from our tribes

<sup>1</sup> I think we must have one of the slurs more than once referred to here

The catalogue is too vast to enumerate, too illustrious to dwell for a moment on secondary names, however eminent. Enough for us that the three great creative minds to whose exquisite inventions all nations at this moment yield, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, are of Hebrew race, and little do your men of fashion, your muscadins of Paris, and your dandies of London, as they thrill into raptures at the notes of a Pasta or a Grisi, little do they suspect that they are offering their homage "to the sweet singers of Israel!"<sup>1</sup>

This is Burke, or perhaps Bolingbroke himself, by the waters of Babylon—not weeping, but exulting over the "flat-nosed Franks" who colonised Lincolnshire and Galway—and singing with all the opportunities of his ampler organisation. I protest that the passage I have scanned seems to me, though *in bravura*, a very fine passage, and, according to its own mode, almost faultless in rhythm<sup>1</sup>. The abundance of dochmiacs is, I think, real, and very characteristic.

It is obviously difficult to write about Dickens here in any fashion that shall even really be adequate, to write about him in a manner which shall be satisfactory to the various classes of his readers is still more obviously impossible. A great deal of his work—the vast majority and the most delightful part beyond question—neither challenges, nor could properly admit, examination of our sort. On the contrary, a majority, perhaps even larger, of his attempts at rhetoric and prose-poetry, are certainly not held to be successes by most good critics. The best of the kind, and a really good one, has always seemed to me to be the overture of the famous "Death of Steerforth" in *David Copperfield*.

It was a murky confusion—here and there blotted with a colour like the colour of the smoke from damp fuel—of flying clouds tossed up into most remarkable heaps, suggesting greater heights in the clouds than there were depths below them to the bottom of the deepest hollows in the earth, through which the wild moon seemed to plunge headlong, as if, in a dread disturbance of the laws of nature, she had lost her way and were frightened. There had been a wind all day, and it was rising then, with an

<sup>1</sup> The description of Jerusalem in *Tancred* should follow it, if I had more room.

extraordinary great sound In another hour it had much increased, and the sky was more overcast, and blew hard

But as the night advanced, the clouds closing in and densely overspreading the whole sky, then very dark, it came on to blow, harder and harder It still increased, until our horses could scarcely face the wind Many times, in the dark part of the night (it was then late in September, when the nights were not short), the leaders turned about, | or came to a dead stop, and we were often | in serious apprehension that the coach | would be blown over Sweeping gusts of rain | came up before this storm, like showers of steel, | and, at those times, when there was any shelter of trees or lee walls to be got, we were fain to stop, in a sheer impossibility of continuing the struggle

When the day broke, it blew harder and harder I had been in Yarmouth when the seamen said it blew great guns, but I had never known the like of this, or anything approaching to it We came to Ipswich—very late, having had to fight every inch of ground since we were ten miles out of London, and found | a cluster of people in the market-place, | who had risen from their beds in the night, | fearful of falling chimneys Some of these, | congregating about the inn yard while we | changed horses, told us of great sheets of lead | having been ripped off a high church tower, | and flung into a by street, which they then | blocked up Others had to tell of country people, coming in from neighbouring villages, who had seen great trees lying torn out of the earth, and whole ricks scattered about the roads and fields | Still there was no abatement in the storm, | but it blew harder

As we struggled on, | nearer and nearer to the sea, from which | this mighty wind was blowing dead on shore, | its force became more and more | terrific Long before we saw the sea, its spray | was on our lips, and showered salt rain upon us | The water was out, over miles and miles of the flat country adjacent to Yarmouth, and every sheet and puddle lashed its banks, | and had its stress of little breakers setting | heavily towards us When we came within | sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, | caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were | like glimpses of another shore with towers | and buildings When at last we got into | the town, the people came out to their doors, | *all aslant, and with streaming hair*,<sup>1</sup> | making a wonder of the mail that had | come through such a night

If I have marked the numerous blank-verse fragments here, it is with no *Schadenfreude*, and certainly out of no unfairness How difficult it is to keep blank verse out of “numerous” prose, we have allowed fully, and seen constantly, while we shall see more still And that

<sup>1</sup> *Not* blank verse, and a fine phrase

Dickens, in his passages of the same class, was apt to abuse it, is scarcely matter for serious discussion. In this passage I hardly think that he can be fairly charged with abusing it, for, despite the numerous and, as has been shown, not seldom consecutive examples, they are often (if scarcely always) resolvable in reading into prose rhythm proper. But, at the same time, it must be confessed that the prevalence of merely iambic cadence, which the presence of much blank verse almost necessarily implies, though it is not incompatible with *real* rhythmical beauty, argues, in every case but Mr Ruskin's, if not even in his (we shall consider this point, if we may), a certain poverty in rhythmical resources, a no doubt unconscious conviction that if you want to make prose harmonious you must "dash and brew it" with the methods of verse itself. And this, if not what Ascham, in his ill-temper at something else, calls "a foul wrong way," is certainly not the more excellent one.

When I say that I hardly know any master of English prose-rhythm greater, in his way, than Thackeray, and that I certainly do not know any one with so various and pervasive a command, I may seem to provoke the answer, "Oh! you are, if not a maniac, at any rate a *manique*." The obsession of Titmarsh blinds and deafens you." Nevertheless, I say it, and will maintain it. That he seldom—perhaps never—tried diploma-pieces of the most elaborate kind may, of course, be admitted, the cap-and-bells, which he never wholly laid aside for more than a minute or two, forbade that. Yet the first of the two long passages which I have selected is not in this way far behind—some may think that it is at least on a level with—the most greatly-intending scenes of description that we have had or shall have, and the second, as a piece of reflection, will be hard to beat in sermon or essay, history or tractate, from Raleigh to Newman. But the most remarkable thing about Thackeray, in our connection—a thing impossible fully to illustrate here,—is his mastery of that ~~mixed style~~ "*shot* with rhythm" which



has been noticed. Even in his earliest and most grotesque extravaganzas you will rarely find a discordant sentence—the very vulgarisms and mis-spellings come like solecisms from a pair of pretty lips and uttered in a musical voice<sup>1</sup>. As there never was a much hastier writer, it is clear that the man thought in rhythm—that the words, as they flowed from his pen, brought the harmony with them. Even his blank verse and his couplets in prose, never, I think, in any one instance unintentional, but deliberately used for burlesque purposes, have a diabolical quality and, as the wine merchants say, “breed” about them, which some very respectable “poets” have never achieved.

In the first passage there are two noteworthy sayings. He tells you that “you can’t put the thing down in prose,” and then he proceeds to do it. And further, he opens the longer, and immeasurably the finer, passage of the doing by the words: “Perhaps it is best for a man of fancy to make his own description.” He does not, luckily, let this deprive us of his, but I have taken the hint so far as to let any “man of fancy” do his scansion here for himself, as I do it for myself every time that I read the piece. I can promise that not in one foot or one syllable will it fail. There is, unavoidably, a blank verse or two, but it will be found that in much the larger number of cases the imminence of one is *escamoté* with extraordinary art.

There should have been a poet in our company to describe that charming little bay of Glaucus, into which we entered on the 26th of September, in the first steamboat that ever disturbed its beautiful waters. You can’t put down in prose that delicious episode of natural poetry, it ought to be done in a symphony, full of sweet melodies and swelling harmonies, or sung in a strain of clear crystal iambics, such as Milnes knows how to write. A mere map, drawn in words, gives the mind no notion of that exquisite nature. What do mountains become in type, or rivers in Mr Vizetelly’s best brevies? Here lies | the sweet | bay | gleaming | peaceful | in the

---

<sup>1</sup> And so, later, the abbreviations and familiarities lose all the bad effect that they have in Augustan style.

r̄ōsy | s̄unsh̄ine , | ḡr̄een | īsl̄ands | d̄ip | h̄ere | ānd | t̄here | īn | īts | w̄at̄ers , |  
 p̄urple | m̄ount̄ains | s̄well | c̄ir̄cl̄ing | r̄ound | īt , | ānd | t̄owards | t̄hem , |  
 r̄is̄ing | f̄rom | t̄he | b̄ay , | s̄t̄r̄etch̄es | ā | r̄ich | ḡr̄een | p̄lain , | f̄ruit̄ful |  
 w̄ith | h̄er̄bs | ānd | v̄arīous | f̄olīage , | īn | t̄he | m̄id̄st | ōf | w̄h̄ich | t̄he  
 w̄h̄ite | h̄ous̄es | t̄w̄inkl̄e I can see a little minaret, and some spread-  
 ing palm trees , but, beyond these, the description would answer as  
 well for Bantry Bay as for Makri You could write so far, nay,  
 much more particularly and grandly, without seeing the place at all,  
 and after reading Beaufort's *Caramania*, which gives you not the  
 least notion of it

Suppose the great hydrographer of the admiralty himself can't  
 describe it, who surveyed the place , suppose Mr Fellowes, who  
 discovered it afterwards—suppose, I say, Sir John Fellowes, Knt ,  
 can't do it (and I defy any man of imagination to get an impression  
 from his book)—can you, vain man, hope to try ? The effect of the  
 artist, as I take it, ought to be, to produce upon his hearer's mind,  
 by his art, an effect something similar to that produced on his own  
 by the sight of the natural object Only music, or the best poetry,  
 can do this Keats's *Ode to the Grecian Urn* is the best description  
 I know of that sweet, old, silent ruin of Telmessus After you have  
 once seen it, the remembrance remains with you, like a tune from  
 Mozart, which he seems to have caught out of heaven, and which  
 rings sweet harmony in your ears for ever after ! It's a benefit for  
 all after life ! You have but to shut your eyes, and think, and recall  
 it, and the delightful vision comes smiling back to your order !—the  
 divine air—the delicious little pageant, which nature set before you  
 on this lucky day

Here is the entry made in the note book on the eventful day —  
 “In the morning steamed into the bay of Glaucus—landed at Makri  
 —cheerful old desolate village—theatre by the beautiful seashore—  
 great fertility, oleanders—a palm tree in the midst of the village,  
 spreading out like a Sultan's aigrette—sculptured caverns, or tombs,  
 up the mountain—camels over the bridge’

Perhaps it is best for a man of fancy to make his own landscape  
 out of these materials to group the couched camels under the  
 plane trees , the little crowd of wandering, ragged heathens come  
 down to the calm water, to behold the nearing steamer , to fancy a  
 mountain, in the sides of which some scores of tombs are rudely  
 carved , pillars and porticoes, and Doric entablatures But it is of  
 the little theatre that he must make the most beautiful picture, a  
 charming little place of festival, lying out on the shore, and looking  
 over the sweet bay and the swelling purple islands No theatre-  
 goer ever looked out on a fairer scene It encourages poetry, idle-  
 ness, delicious sensual reverie O Jones ! friend of my heart ! would  
 you not like to be a white robed Greek, lolling languidly on the cool

bencnes here, and pouring compliments in the Ionic dialect into the rosy ears of Neæra ? Instead of Jones, your name should be Ionides, instead of a silk hat, you should wear a chaplet of roses in your hair, you would not listen to the choruses they were singing on the stage, for the voice of the fair one would be whispering a rendezvous for the *mesonuktrais horais*, and my Ionides would have no ear for aught beside. Yonder, in the mountain, they would carve a Doric cave temple, to receive your urn when all was done, and you would be accompanied thither by a dirge of the surviving Ionidæ. The caves of the dead are empty now, however, and their place knows them not any more among the festal haunts of the living.

Of the triumph of unobtrusive accompaniment that follows, little need be said. The effect of the central italicised molossus (*not* three monosyllables, which would be too rhetorical) is wonderful, and if, as I think, we should allow a sort of slur in "post[ure]-making," it is only like some interesting things in verse<sup>1</sup>.

There came a day when the round of decorous pleasures and solemn gaieties in which Mr Joseph Sedley's family indulged was interrupted by an event which happens in most houses. As you ascend the staircase of your house from the drawing- towards the bedroom floors, you may have remarked a little arch in the wall right before you which at once gives light to the stair which leads from the second story to the third, where the nursery and servants' chambers commonly are, and serves for another purpose of utility, of which the undertaker's men can give you a notion. They rest the coffins upon that arch, or pass them through it so as not to disturb in any unseemly manner the cold tenant slumbering within the black arch.

That second-floor arch in a London house, looking up and down the well of the staircase, and commanding the main thoroughfare by which the inhabitants are passing, by which the cook looks down before daylight to scour her pots and pans in the kitchen, by which the young master stealthily ascends, having left his boots in the hall, and let himself in after dawn from a jolly night at the club, down which miss | comes rustling | in fresh ribbons | and spreading | muslins, | brilliant | and beautiful, | and prepared | for conquest | and the ball, or master Tommy slides, preferring the banisters for a mode of conveyance, and disdaining danger and the stair, down

---

<sup>1</sup> *V Hist Pros* iii 136. As is the four syllable foot with slur in verse where the monosyllable is the usual limit, so is the six syllable with slur in prose where the dochmiac takes the same regular place.

which the mother is fondly carried smiling in her strong husband's arms, as he steps steadily step by step, and followed by the monthly nurse, on the day when the medical man has pronounced that the charming patient may go down stairs, up which John lurks to bed, yawning with a sputtering tallow candle, and to gather up before sunrise the boots which are awaiting him in the passages,—that stair, up or down which babies are carried, old people are helped, guests are marshalled to the ball, the parson walks to the christening, the doctor to the sick room, and the undertaker's men to the upper floor, what a memento of life, death, and vanity it is—that arch and stair—if you choose to consider it, and sit on the landing, looking up and down the well! The doctor will come up to us for

the last time there, my friend in motley    The nurse | will look in |  
 at the curtains, | and you | take no notice, | and then | she will fling  
 open | the windows | for a little, | and let in | the air | Then they  
 will pull down all the front blinds of the house and live in the back  
 rooms, then they will send for the lawyer and other men in black,  
 etc    Your comedy | and mine | will have been played | then, | and  
 we | shall be removed, | *O how far*, | from the trumpets, | and the  
 shouting, | and the post[ure] making | If we are gentlefolks they  
 will put hatchments over our late domicile, with gilt cherubim, and  
 mottoes stating that there is "Quiet in Heaven" Your son will new  
 furnish the house, or perhaps let it, and go into a more modern  
 quarter, your name will be among the "Members Deceased," in the  
 lists of your clubs next year    However much you may be mourned,  
 your widow will like to have her weeds neatly made, the cook will  
 send, or come up, to ask about dinner, the survivors will soon bear  
 to look at your picture over the mantelpiece, which will presently be  
 deposed from the place of honour, to make way for the portrait of  
 the son who reigns

In place of the impossible luxuriance of example above referred to, let two or three specimens from a single novel, *Vanity Fair*, not laboriously searched for, but noted in the course of a casual re-reading, which was not undertaken with a view to this book at all, and in which the reader never thought of making any notes till it suddenly occurred to him to do so. The first has perhaps no special beauty that the ordinary reader should desire it

Recollections of the best ordained banquets will scarcely cheer sick epicures    Reminiscences of the most becoming dresses and brilliant ball triumphs will go a very little way to console faded

beauties Perhaps statesmen, at a certain period of existence, are not much gratified at thinking over the most triumphant divisions, and the success or the pleasure of yesterday becomes of very small account when a certain (albeit uncertain) morrow is in view about which we all of us must some day or other be speculating

This is an example (subtly "Titmarshized," of course) of standard style, and the most obvious rhythmical device in it is a familiar one, of which we have seen many examples, and which has been called telescoping or lengthening out of parallel periods. But note how carefully—at least how successfully—this is done! how the elongation comes naturally for the sense, as well as happily for the sound. The closing words in the three last members ("beauties," "divisions," "speculating") lengthen in unison with the groups, and here, as *not* in most other and almost all earlier cases, the full syllabic values of the groups behind these closes come in<sup>1</sup>

Here is a magnificent, if short, passage from the part of the book which some (though I confess I do not) put highest as a minor whole

She was wrapped | in a white | morning | dress, | her hair |  
falling | on her shoulders | and her large eyes | fixed | and without  
light By way of helping on the preparations for the departure, and  
showing that she too could be useful at a moment so critical, this  
poor soul had taken up a sash of George's from the drawers whereon  
it lay and followed him to and fro, with the sash in her hand, looking  
on mutely as the packing proceeded She came out | and stood |  
leaning | at the wall, | holding this sash | against | her bosom, | from  
which | the heavy | net | of crimson | dropped | like a large | stain |  
of blood

Ah! how often during the last thirty or forty years—  
nay, if I may dare to say, even during the last ten, when,  
as it has been finely observed, "the men who carry on  
their shoulders the literature of the twentieth century

<sup>1</sup> There are some, of course, to whom the parenthetic "albeit uncertain" will seem offensive *Nicht mir*

know the magic of literature, the power to take a reader out of himself and bring him nearer to the heart of the world"—how often have I seen these Atlantean psychagogues, consciously or unconsciously, trying to follow and beat those last few words in sound and picture—trying—and, well, not quite succeeding. The most trivial sentences in Thackeray show this magic, as it seems to me, though not perhaps to the writer just quoted.

Take another and shorter—not, I hope, impudently short

Becký | was always | good to him, | always | amused, | never |  
angry

Anybody can do that? The Atlantes of the twentieth century could do it, in a posture vernacularly well known, but for the peril of disturbing the literature which they carry? Perhaps, but please find something like it for me before 1845, and out of Thackeray, if you will kindly do so. *In* him it is everywhere.

Let us conclude the examples of this chapter with a passage from one of the greatest masters of quietly exquisite prose that the world has ever seen. To my ear there is also a curious community of note with the passage above cited from Thackeray on the Ionian ruins.

Let us consider, | too, | how differently | young | and old | are  
affected | by the words | of some classic | author, | such | as Homēr |  
or Horace | Passages, | which to a boy | are but | rhetorical | com-  
monplaces, | neither better | nor worse | than a hundred | others, |  
which any | clever writer | might | supply, | which he gets | by heart |  
and thinks | very fine, and imitates, | as he thinks, | successfully, |  
in his own | flowing | versification, | at length | come home to him, |  
when long years | have passed, | and he has had | experience | of  
life, | and pierce him, as if | he had never | before | known them, |  
with their sad | earnestness | and vivid | exactness | Then he comes |

to understand | how | it is | that lines, | the birth | of some chance  
 morning | or evening | at an Ionian | festival, | or among | the  
 Sabine | hills, | have lasted | generation | after | generation, | for  
 thousands | of years | with a power | over the mind, | and a charm |  
 which the current | literature | of his own day, | with all | its obvious |  
 advantages, | is utterly | unable | to rival | Perhaps | this is | the  
 reason of | the mediæval | opinion | about Virgil, | as of a prophet |  
 or a magician, | his single | words | and phrases, | his pathetic |  
 half-lines, | giving utterance, | as the voice | of Nature | herself, |  
 to that pain | and weariness, | yet hope | of better | things, | which  
 is | the experience | of her children | in every | time |

Not one single collocation of words which, without absurd straining of the natural reading, can be got into a blank verse, no spilt of epithets, not one of the common rhetorical devices to "get rhythm" yet, as will be seen from the scansion, an unbroken, unslurred<sup>1</sup> current of harmony right through the piece, a harmony to which every syllable supplies its quota

In this quiet but wonderful piece, the method<sup>2</sup> of which we may later find extended in a still more famous example of Newman's great pupil and, in turn, deserter, Froude, the possibilities of standard style, slightly but marvellously "super-rhythmed," are seen almost at their perfection. Froude, as we shall see, went further in the direction of rhythmical ornament and elaboration, indeed, he may be said to have overstepped the strictly classical character of the "standard" itself. But on this, and on other wider considerations to be deduced from the other constituents of this chapter, it should be sufficient to

<sup>1</sup> The occasional valuations of "ion," etc., as monosyllabic do not, of course, in modern English constitute a real slur

<sup>2</sup> Pusey was, of course, as a *writer*, much inferior to Newman, but I have wondered whether the younger man did not take something of his written style from the delivery of that (slightly) elder, who was to him always *ὁ μέγας*. It had a crystalline purity of tone, and a faintly tremulous calmness of rhythm, which, as I never "sat under" Newman himself, has always made me hear the sentences of the fugitive Cardinal in the voice of the steadfast Canon

generalise in the Conclusion We must now, if we may, pass, in a chapter which can hardly be a short one, but which must be kept down as far as possible, to the great exponents, no longer living, of "numerous" and other prose in the last sixty years of the nineteenth century



## CHAPTER XI

### RUSKIN AND LATER NINETEENTH-CENTURY PROSE

1843—*Modern Painters*—Influences on Ruskin's style—His subjects—His practice in verse, and its marks on his prose—Kingsley his pure Ruskinian prose—His "song-shape" style—Charlotte Brontë—"George Eliot"—Mr Froude—Matthew Arnold—His peculiar system of repetition—Examples, and discussion of it—Mansel—A false answer corrected—Pater—His quietism—His apes Mr Frederick Myers—Mr Swinburne—The mixed influences in him—Examples in great and little—William Morris—"Wardour Street"—or not?—George Meredith his Meredithesque—Stevenson

APPRECIATIONS of the merit, as prose, of Mr Ruskin's prose-writing have differed, and, I doubt not, still do differ, though perhaps less than was once the case. But I can hardly imagine any critic denying that the appearance of the work of this "Graduate of Oxford" made 1843 an epoch for ever in the history of English prose style. By that year Landor and De Quincey had long written, and in it they were still writing copiously in the more elaborate manners, while for a less period, with more violent opposition at first, but with much greater influence, Carlyle had been revolutionising the medium in ways partly akin, partly diverse. But most of the older masters of the standard style were dead—Southey died in this very year—or touching the close of their career, there was a great deal of slovenly writing about, and though men older than Ruskin—such as the younger of those treated in the last chapter—were to write for twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty, years longer, Ruskin, young as he was, was ahead of his own generation, such as

Matthew Arnold, Froude, Kingsley, while Mr George Meredith was a boy of fifteen. Whether he shows any influence from the older prose harmonists who had begun to write, as it were, like fairy parents over his cradle, I must leave to some industrious person to expiscate or rummage out, for the haystack of Ruskinian autobiography is not only mighty in bulk but scattered rather forbiddingly. I should think that, with him, the main guidance was partly that of the Time-Spirit itself, partly the result of two special additions thereto in the individual case.

We have seen how the determination away from generalities in description was the most powerful aid to the development of the fuller harmony of prose—the writer's anxiety to be particular necessitating, by conscious or unconscious implication, attention to each word, each syllable, and specially negating the drab and slab indistinctness of the Middletonian buckram, and the comelier, but still too uniform, broadcloth of the "standard." But what even De Quincey, even Landor, had been to the describers of the eighteenth century, that and more also Mr Ruskin set himself to be to them. The Savernake forest, with its foreground of Fannies and roses, the noble, almost Turneresque, landscape of Baïæ and Posilippo, are but sketches to the marvellous panorama—as of a Perseus flight from the Mediterranean to the Arctic,—or to the companion pictures of the square of St Mark and that cathedral close which is a sort of dream-mixture of Canterbury and York, of Peterborough and Salisbury, and a score of other minsters and minster-precincts, from Durham to Exeter, and from Lincoln to St David's. Scenery and architecture, pictures and living creatures,<sup>1</sup> crowded about that extraordinary brain and hand, clamouring for reproduction in words—and getting it. Certainly, if, as some have it, it is enough to be very full of your subject, there is no wonder that Ruskin was polyphonic in style. Certainly, if, as others hold, the style is the man before any subjects strike him,

<sup>1</sup> The *two* Zoës—as one might call them by a joint reminiscence of Aristotle and Blake.

he could be at no loss in showing that style for any want of subjects afterwards

There was, however, I think, another influence, more doubtfully salutary, but pretty certainly operative. As one takes down from the shelf—not, indeed, for the first, but, it is to be feared, not for much more than the second time—a pair of mighty quartos, decently clad in white vellum and green linen, sumptuously printed, with lovely uncut margins, and cunningly embellished by not a few most desirable drawings, one comforting suggestion compensates the deplorable acknowledgment that here is really—as in another case there was once so falsely asserted to be—“very valueless verse.” That suggestion is that perhaps, or rather all but certainly, if Ruskin had been a better poet he would have been a very inferior, and beyond all question a much less prolific, prose-writer. Now (thank Heaven! once more, as in the case of De Quincey), we have no lack of good poets, and though this book does not exactly show a lack of good prose-writers, we had a little more room for reinforcement there. At any rate, it is excessively unlikely that any possible poetic Ruskin could have been, in his vocation, as good as the prose Ruskin we have got. So let us, for once, be Panglossian.

It is, further, the most natural thing in the world that this *Drang nach Versen*, when it found itself baffled and beaten off from actual verse, should have left unusual formal traces on the prose in which it happily consoled and lost itself. De Quincey, as has been said, evidently had, despite his tell-tale boast of what he could have been and he would, no real turn for actual poetry. Men as different as Southey, Coleridge, Landor, Shelley, Moore, could, with differing but real effect, use either harmony as they pleased. Ruskin had the poetic velleity with not a little of the poetic thought—he is one of the chief refutations of Wordsworth’s astounding *petitio principii*—and he had something, too, of the mechanical accomplishment, though nothing higher, of poetic form. Accordingly, you will find in him more actual metre, and especially

more actual blank verse, even allowing proportion for his immense volume, than in any great prose writer known to me. The fact is, of course, notorious (we shall see abundant evidence of it even in the few short specimens that we can afford), but it must be clear that we are not entitled to neglect it, or to dismiss it with very brief discussion, because it happens to be one of the few well-known facts in a mostly pioneer enquiry. Nor is such discussion obviated—it is, in fact, made all the more desirable—by the fact that Ruskin's *δεινότης*—his astonishing blend of ingenuity and vigour—actually carries off, not merely occasional blank heroics, but whole batches, and almost paragraphs of them, unnoticed or half noticed, in the gorgeous flood of colour and the infinite symphony of sound.

So ineluctable indeed was this tendency towards metre in Ruskin, that there are in him (and this has been much less noticed than the blank verse) very frequent stanza-arrangements such as may be found in avowed hybrids like the styles of *Ossian* and of Blake's "Prophecies," but hardly elsewhere, except by mere accident, till Ruskin himself set the example. Every now and then, in these formed or half-formed stanzas, there is actual rhyme, as in a description of Rouen

And the city lay

Under its guarding hills  
One labyrinth of *delight*,  
Its grey and fretted towers  
Misty in their magnificence of *height*,

where a very thinkable equivalent<sup>1</sup> for "their magnificence of" will bring the thing metrically off.

Here is another, unrhymed, and saved in the first line (not the last) by a sort of insertion which can easily be *disinserted*

---

<sup>1</sup> Such as

"Misty in *topless* height"

Of course the actual phrase is an instance of the *escamotage*, the clever "conveyance," which passes off the metrical card as possibly prose rhythmical.

And the [far reaching] ridges [of pastoral mountain] succeed  
each other <sup>1</sup>

Like the long and sighing swell  
Which moves over quiet waters,  
From some far off stormy sea

The brain of his style seems to have been full of these verse-matrices, and inasmuch they are far more difficult subjects, for smuggling on and off, than a blank verse, it is simply astounding to see how the lava of his volcanic expression digests and assimilates the casts from them

Of the blank verses by themselves it is unnecessary to extract special examples you can hardly open a page of Ruskin—when his prose has caught fire—without finding them, and they can be abundantly indicated, as they occur, in the specimens which we shall give with a more general intent. And these, both for the special object and the general, cannot be better headed than by the famous and magnificent picture of the front of St Mark's, above referred to

And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision | out of the earth, and all the great square seems | to have opened from it in a kind of awe, | that we may see it far away,—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into | a long low pyramid of coloured light, | a treasure heap, it seems, partly of gold, | and partly of opal and mother of pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber, and delicate as ivory, | sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm | leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes, | and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms | of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other | across the gates, their figures indistinct | among the gleaming of the golden ground | through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first | its gates were angel-guarded long ago | And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated

<sup>1</sup> Here it may be noticed that the first prose member supplies *two* verse lines of the required character

“And the ridges of pastoral mountain,”

or

“And the ridges succeed each other”

stones, jasper | and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine | spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra like, "their bluest veins to kiss"— | the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing | line after line of azure undulation, | as a receding tide leaves the waved sand, | their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross, and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven and the labours of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth, and above these | another range of glittering pinnacles, | mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,— | a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are | seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, | and the St Mark's Lion, lifted | on a blue field covered with stars, until | at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests | of the arches break into a marble foam, | and toss themselves far into the blue sky | in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if | the breakers on the Lido shore had been | frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs | had inlaid them with coral and amethyst<sup>1</sup> |

Now, of course, it obviously may be said, and probably has been said a hundred times, that this is illegitimate, a "monstrous beauty," something that "you *ought not* to like." Well! this is the seventh vial-volume (I blush for it) that I have opened in hope of pouring contempt and destruction on the doctrine of monstrous beauties. It is impossible that beauty should be monstrous, and if I met a monster that pretended to be one and was beautiful, I should, like Prince Serthenyn, tell it to its beautiful face that it was no monster. But is this beautiful? There of course we come to the old flaming walls of the world of taste. I can only say that if it is not, I do not know where beauty of prose is to be found.

But there is something more than this to be said—something more than mere personal preference to be alleged, with or without the chance of finding oneself not alone in it. After all, the dicta<sup>2</sup> of some pretty sane and moderate authorities of the most classical character—of Dionysius and of Quintilian—can be pleaded in

<sup>1</sup> Eight almost impeccable "blanks" following each other, *ten* with the brachycatalectic "and the St Mark's" only interposed as a Shakespearean fragment, and *thirteen* with the not very alien intrusion of "a confusion horses are."

<sup>2</sup> *V sup* title page and pp. 18

favour of this merging and meeting of all sorts of metrical music in the flood of rhythmical prose. And the other methods by which the effect is attained are strict developments of those of masters so different and yet so authoritative as, for instance, Hooker and Gibbon. Vast as are the sentence-paragraphs, long as is the central sweep which the momentum of their manner enables them to sustain, the principle of the flight, for all their flutter and flash of gorgeous plumage, is not so very unlike the rise and poise and sinking of the *Eccelesiastical Poëty*, while the minor undulations of the composing clauses, for all the splash and spray, "send on" the reader in a fashion not so fundamentally different from the smoother and sedater sweep of the *Decline and Fall*.

Here, too, one obvious feature of Ruskin's style—the way in which the enormous sentences are built up, tier on tier, by clauses so admirably and distinctly *cumulative* that no confusion whatever results—may seem to belong to other departments than ours. But, in reality, this feature has almost infinite connection with, and influence upon, the pure rhythm of the composition. And, in particular, it helps, almost more than any other characteristic, to perform that office of "carrying over" the imbedded or rather "inflowed" verse-fragments, while these, in their turn, eddy and undulate and foambell it with their endless variety of form, and colour, and tone. Not merely does the constant blank verse appear—with the frequency indicated by the straight division-mark, yet for the most part justifying itself by different rhetorical partition—but it interarches and crosses itself with other things distinct from it—scraps and fragments of other rhythms, single-lined, coupleted—almost stanzaed after the fashion noted above—in the glorious welter—

The crests of the arches break  
 Into a marble foam,  
 And toss themselves far [a/ŏf/]  
 In flashes of sculptured spray—

as you may feel inclined to vary it, or complete it, from the actual material offered you

But let us take another passage—somewhat shorter and somewhat quieter—and apply to it the old method of continuous scansion to bring out the *prose* feet. The reflective close of the “Jura Pine Forest,” the earlier portion of which has been as florid and as “blank-verse” as the “St Mark” itself, will do admirably

It would | be difficult | to conceive | a scene | less dependent |  
 upon any | other | interest | than that | of its own | secluded | and  
 serious | beauty , | but the writer | well | remembers | the sudden |  
 blankness | and chill | which were cast | upon it | when he en-  
 deavoured , | in order | more strictly | to arrive | at the sources | of  
 its | impressiveness , | to imagine it , | for a moment , | a scene | in  
 some | aboriginal | forest | of the New | Continent | The flowers |  
 in an instant | lost | their light , | the river | its music , | the hills |  
 became | oppressively | desolate , | a heaviness | in the boughs | of  
 the darkened | forest | showed | how much | of their former | power |  
 had been dependent | upon a life | which was not | theirs , | how  
 much | of the glory | of the imperishable,<sup>1</sup> | or continually | re-  
 newed , | creation | is reflected | from things | more precious | in  
 their memories | than it , | in its | renewing | Those ever-|spring-  
 ing | flowers | and ever | flowing | streams | had been dyed | by the  
 deep | colours | of human | endurance , | valour , | and virtue , | and  
 the crests | of the sable | hills | that rose | against | the evening |  
 sky | received | a deeper | worship , | because | their far | shadows |  
 fell eastward | over the iron | wall | of Joux , | and the four-square |  
 keep | of Granson — *S L A* VI § 1

I do not say that you may not screw out some metrical

<sup>1</sup> This is one of those strictly speaking six syllabled feet which are practically and by delivery dochmiacs. And so is the next. But on my older principle of not hesitating to split words I should have cut them—and I have no objection to cutting them now—into three feet, “the imperish|able or continually renewed”



fragment here and there in this, but they are certainly few, and as certainly not prominent, while the quiet flow of the passage would not help to disguise them if they were

How tempting it is to multiply longer and shorter exemplifications from Ruskin need not be said. He will sometimes give you quite short sentences, not really metrical at all, somewhat stiff in their brocade of language, but gorgeous for all that.

Far above, in thunder blue serration, stand the eternal edges of the angry Apennine, dark with rolling impendence of volcanic cloud.

Here "eternal" to "Apennine" is a constructive Alexandrine, and "rolling" to "cloud" a heroic. But no human being with an ear and a tongue that obeys it would ever dream of reading them as such.

Sometimes—very often, of course—his rhythms are mainly Scriptural, as in that fine passage of *Modern Painters* which ends

He has not heaped the rocks of the mountain only for the quarry,  
nor clothed the grass of the field only for the oven.

And yet often again, at one period particularly, the well-known influence of Carlyle brings about a mixture of rhythms, very curious and interesting. It is well seen in the contrast of the birthplaces and breedings of Giorgione and Turner.

In hope and honour, lulled by flowing of wave<sup>1</sup> around their isles of sacred sand, each with his name written and the cross graved at his side, lay her dead. A wonderful piece of a world. Rather itself a world.

Of things beautiful, besides men and women, dusty sunbeams up and down the street in summer mornings, deep furrowed cabbage leaves at the green grocers', magnificence of oranges in wheelbarrows round the corner, and Thames shore within three minutes' race.

But indeed it would be somewhat fatuous to pretend

<sup>1</sup> The rhythmical effect of dropping articles, so constantly exhibited in Carlyle himself, is one of the agreeable *arcana minora* of the subject. I suppose the brain at once expects and misses them, and so a little shock, not disagreeable but distinctly perceptible, is produced.

to say anything new about Ruskin. We drop here from our mostly untrodden ways into a well-known *diversorium*, and, without having any ascetic Antonian and Aïnoldian objection to such places, we need not play the superfluous cicerone in them. He could not have been omitted without something of affectation in the compiler of this book, and something more of loss to the reader of it. Nor, except the saturation with metre or metre's worth, and the unique fashion in which this is carried off, is there perhaps very much in him that requires close or elaborate analysis. His immense volume, and its direction to a whole encyclopædia of subjects, may have prevented any intense idiosyncrasy of style, and certainly diverted his energies into a great many different channels of it. You may find, besides the Biblical and Carlylian echoes just noted, numerous passages of almost *prae*-"standard", attempts, not, as a rule, very happy, at that humorous-familiar which almost pointedly reduces rhythm to the minimum, several other varieties. And in the general history which I am trying to write, it may be questioned whether his position is not rather that of a fertile and delightful producer, and, still more, an influence of almost incalculable force and range, than that of an extremely original deviser of new methods. His are no doubt the methods of Coleridge in the *Anima* (which he did not and could not know), of De Quincey and Landor and Wilson (which he did), with a "much more also" added. But they are still those methods.

Hardly any one was quicker to feel the widely extended influence of *Modern Painters* than Charles Kingsley, and in his very first novel, *Yeast*, we find this

Launcelot sat and tried to catch peich, but Fregarva's words haunted him. He lighted his cigar, and tried to think earnestly over the matter, but he had got into the wrong place for thinking. All his thoughts, all his sympathies, were drowned in the rush and whirl of the water. He forgot everything else in the mere animal enjoyment of sight and sound. Like many young men at his crisis of life, he had given himself up to the mere contemplation of nature till he had become her slave, and now a luscious scene, a singing

bird, were enough to allure his mind away from the most earnest and awful thoughts. He tried to think, but the river would not let him. It thundered and spouted out behind him from the hatches, and leapt madly past him, and caught his eyes in spite of him, and swept them away down its dancing waves, and then let them go again only to sweep them down again and again, till his brain felt a delicious dizziness from the everlasting rush and the everlasting roar. And then below, how it spread, | and writhed, and whirled into transparent fans, | hissing and twining snakes, polished glass wreaths, | huge crystal bells, which boiled up from the bottom, | and dived again beneath long threads | of creamy foam, and swung round posts and roots, | and rushed blackening under dark weed fringed boughs, and gnawed at the marly banks, | and shook the ever restless bulrushes, | till it was swept away and down over the white pebbles | and olive weeds, in one broad rippling sheet | of molten silver, towards<sup>1</sup> the distant sea |. Downwards it fled ever, and bore his thoughts floating on its oily stream, and the great trout, with their yellow sides and peacock backs, lunged among the eddies, and the silver grayling dimpled and wandered upon the shallows, and the May flies flickered and rustled round him like water fairies, with their green gauzy wings, the coot clanked musically among the reeds, the frogs hummed their ceaseless vespers monotone, the kingfisher darted from his hole in the bank like a blue | spark of electric light, the swallows' bills | snapped as they twined and hawked above the pool, | the swifts' wings whirled like musket balls, as they | rushed screaming past his head, and ever the river fled by, bearing his eyes away down the current, till its wild eddies began | to glow with crimson beneath the setting sun.

Here there is not only the beautiful bane of blank verse, marked in some half-dozen instances (it has not been thought necessary to scan the whole passage), but interesting fragments, as in Ruskin himself, of other verse measures

And ev|er the riv|er fleet|ed by

And the May |flies flick|ered and rus|tled

Down|wards it fleet|ed ev|er

But it is all melted and blended into thoroughly sound prose, and here and there, as in

---

<sup>1</sup> Faking this monosyllabically. But it is really a dissyllable in the place, as, in fact, it is generally in good writers, and so duly trips up the blank-verse run, and substitutes a grave prose rhythm.

It thundered and spouted [out] behind him,

you see the cunning skid inserted to prevent the whole revolving in too verse-like a fashion And I think it is fair to Kingsley to add that if the reader will look carefully at the construction and contrasting of the clause lengths in the sentence, "And then below distant sea," he will see more careful art in the disciple than in some at least of the master's outpourings

In *Hypatia*, and elsewhere, following his other master, Carlyle, he too often adopted an excessively broken fashion of rhythm, produced by mechanical means of rows of points and so forth, which sometimes become a little irritating In *The Heroes*, in the *Water-Babies*, and elsewhere, examples of prose harmony in the severer and simpler, as well as in the more exuberant types of splendour, abound But his natural tendency was rather in the direction of even further indulgence in quasi-metrical rhythm It is well known to students of prosodic effect that there is hardly a single poet, not of the highest class, who, in so small a body of poetic work, has shown such various, such original, and such almost impeccable mastery of metre as the author of *Andromeda* But—contrary to a pretty general rule—he did not wholly reserve for verse his more tunable efforts The famous passage at the close of *Westward Ho!* was quite intentional, and he knew that it was a doubtful experiment I suppose it is, but I cannot help thinking that if Mercury and Apollo sat *in banco* and "broke" Kingsley for disregarding their boundary laws as officer of either, they would agree to make him Warden of the joint Marches next moment The thing is so curious, as well as so beautiful, that it may be well to have it displayed in print, both as straightforward prose and in its rhythmical-metrical stave-order

Wondering, they set him down upon the heather, while the bees hummed round them in the sun, and Amyas felt for a hand of each, and clasped it in his own hand, and began—

"When you left me there upon the rock, lads, I looked away and out to sea, to get one last snuff of the merry sea breeze, which will never sail me again And as I looked, I tell you truth, I could see

the water and the sky, as plain as ever I saw them, till I thought my sight was come again. But soon I knew it was not so, for I saw more than man could see, right over the ocean, as I live, and away to the Spanish Main. And I saw Barbados, and Grenada, and all the isles that we ever sailed by, and La Guayra in Carraccas, and the Silla, and the house beneath it where she lived. And I saw him walking with her on the barbecu, and he loved her then. I saw what I saw, and he loved her, and I say he loves her still.

"Then I saw the cliffs beneath me, and the Gull rock, and the Shutter, and the Ledge, I saw them, William Cary, and the weeds beneath the merry blue sea. And I saw the grand old galleon, Will, she has righted with the sweeping of the tide. She lies in fifteen fathoms, at the edge of the rocks, upon the sand, and her men are all lying around her, asleep until the judgment day."

Cary and Jack looked at him, and then at each other. His eyes were clear, and bright, and full of meaning, and yet they knew that he was blind. His voice was shaping itself into a song. Was he inspired? Insane? What was it? And they listened with awe-struck faces, as the giant pointed down into the blue depths far below, and went on.

"And I saw him sitting in his cabin, like a valiant gentleman of Spain, and his officers were sitting round him with their swords upon the table at the wine. And the prawns and the cray fish, and the rockling, they swam in and out above their heads, but Don Guzman he never heeded, but sat still, and drank his wine. Then he took a locket from his bosom, and I heard him speak, Will, and he said 'Here's the picture of my fair and true lady, drink to her, senors, all.' Then he spoke to me, Will, and called me, right up through the oar weed and the sea. 'We have had a fair quarrel, senior, it is time to be friends once more. My wife and your brother have forgiven me, so your honour takes no stain.' And I answered, 'We are friends, Don Guzman, God has judged our quarrel, and not we.' Then he said, 'I sinned, and I am punished.' And I said, 'And, senior, so am I.' Then he held out his hand to me, Cary, and I stooped to take it, and awoke."

And I saw | Barbados, | and Grenada, and all the isles | that we  
ever | sailed by,

and La Guayra | in Carraccas, | and the Silla, and the house |  
beneath it | where she lived

And I saw him | walking | with her | on the barbecu, and he loved  
her | then

I saw | what I saw, | and he loved her, and I say he | loves her |  
still

Then I saw the | cliffs be|neath me, and the Gull rock, | and the  
 Shutter, | and the Ledge,  
 I saw them, | Willam, | Cary, and the weeds | beneath the merry |  
 blue sea  
 And I saw the | grand old | galleon, | Will, she has lighted | with  
 the sweeping | of the tide  
 She lies in | fifteen | fathoms, at the edge of | the rocks, upon | the  
 sand,  
 and her men are | all lying | around her, asleep until | the judg  
 ment | day

And I saw him | sitting | in his cabin like a valiant | gentleman |  
 of Spain,  
 and his officers | were sitting | round him with their swords up|on  
 the table | at the wine  
 And the prawns and | the cray fish, | and the rockling, they swam  
 in | and out above | their heads,  
 but Don Guzman | he never | heeded, but sat still, and | drank his |  
 wine  
 Then he took | a locket | from his bosom, and I heard him | speak,  
 Will, | and he said  
 "Here's the picture | of my fair and | true lady, drink to her, |  
 senors, | all"  
 Then he spoke to me, | Will, | and called me, right up | through  
 the oar-weed | and the sea  
 "We have had | a fair quarrel, | senor, it is time | to be friends |  
 once more  
 My wife | and your brother | have forgiven me, so your honour |  
 takes no | stain"

And Ī answered, | “Ŵe are frĕnds, | Dōn Gūzmān, Gōd hās  
judged | ōuī quārrel, | and nōt wē”  
Then hē said, | “Ī sinned, | and Ī am punished” And Ī said, |  
“And, sēnōr, | sō am Ī”

The thing is, I say, most curious It is not exactly like anything that we have seen, though it is perhaps a development, by a hand of far greater technical skill in verse, of what we have seen in Mr Ruskin It is not heavily blank-versed prose, indeed, the prevailing rhythm is trisyllabic or rather quadrisyllabic<sup>1</sup> It is not in the least like the long and comparatively *equilibrated* lines of Blake's "Prophetic" books There is no artificial stave division as there is in *Ossian*, and (though of a very different kind) in *Leaves of Grass* It is, as its author with perfect appositeness describes it, "prose shaped into song," but with constant, and it would seem deliberate, attention to the insertion, from short time to time, of words that slightly break the regularity of the rhythm, and remind you that, after all, it is not meant to be metre In its avoidance of too definitely poetic diction, in its colloquial forms, and in this carefully adjusted "knapping" of the rhythm, it seems to me, though undoubtedly a dangerous, a successfully-brought-off experiment, and one well suited for the purposes of romance—occasionally But, as the late Professor Bain said of kissing in a phrase which I may have quoted before (it is so delectable), "the occasion should be adequate, and the actuality rare"

I made some remarks in the last chapter on the difficulty of "sampling" the general rhythm of novelists,

<sup>1</sup> It is not, I hope, necessary to explain at any length my principle of arrangement It is that of lengthened staves with a strong *Sigurd* centre pause (marked )—in fact, some of them are not unlike *Sigurd* lines, a quarter of a century before date In some cases, of course, these will easily adjust themselves to ballad subdivision with generous anapæstic substitution

"But Don Guzman he never heeded,  
But sat still and drank his wine"

Generally, however, the all powerful and all pervading Ionic *a minore*, or third pæon, is the key note, and its continuance, beyond strict prose perfection, is the mother of the measure

and this necessarily proves harder as we get into the ever-thickening press of those of the middle and later nineteenth century. Charlotte Brontë, both for her own merits and for some estimates that have been held of her, must have discussion and exemplification as a pendant to Kingsley. Then, perhaps, one from each "George," to give the sexes no advantage over each other, may suffice, but, for reasons, the real George—Mr Meredith—had better be postponed.

With respect to the Brontës, one of the most competent critics I know, my friend Professor Vaughan, while admitting that Emily's "prose lyrics" are rather diffused than concentrated, claims for Charlotte, in the closing passage of *Villette*, an "arrangement of words supremely beautiful," and such as he would rather have written than any but a very few passages in English, while he ranks with it Louis Moore's vision of the moon in *Shirley*. For my part I should put the three descriptions of the pictures in *Jane Eyre* (chap xiii) above both of these as mere "beautiful arrangements of words"<sup>1</sup>. But (playing the ungrateful but necessary part of Devil's Advocate) I should suggest that there is, even in this last, something like a very definite evidence of "pattern" from De Quincey in the *Suspense*. While as for Professor Vaughan's favourite, nothing can exceed its pathos or its appropriateness in substance but in style, and especially in rhythm, I should say that it approaches too near to the bastard poetic—it is of our Second, not our Third class (*v sup* p 342). The truth, I think, is that here, as elsewhere, that peculiar and rather specially feminine *crudity* which accompanied all Charlotte's unquestioned power and passion, as a sort of *impotentia* in the true Latin sense, prevented, and would always have prevented her, from achieving full mistress-ship in this

<sup>1</sup> These are preceded by a shorter piece of the same kind (towards the end of chap xii), which is, perhaps, even finer, but rather more blank versified, and throughout *Villette* there is much of the same kind of "fine writing," as Matthew Arnold calls it in his severe, but not quite unjust, remarks on the book.



direction In the next generation a third- or fourth-rate writer of the same sex, whose name it is unnecessary to mention, pleaded (or rather prided herself upon the notion) that "the burden of *meaning* lay too heavy on a woman's soul" to let her command elaborately formal metres It is possible to apply this, quite differently, so that it may be not piententious nonsense, but only a milder form of that "malediction of Eve" which even the "benediction of Mary" has not fully removed in any case known to me except in that of Miss Christina Rossetti—the removal being perhaps a fee to the model of a certain "Girlhood" picture It will, however, only be fair to give Professor Vaughan's preferred piece and mine

The sun passes the equinox, the days shorten, the leaves grow sere, but—he is coming

Frosts appear at night November has sent his fogs in advance, the wind takes its autumn moan, but—he is coming

The skies hang full and dark, a rack sails from the west, the clouds cast themselves into strange forms—arches and broad radiations, there rise resplendent mornings—glorious, royal, purple as monarch in his state, the heavens are one flame, so wild are they, they rival battle at its thickest—so bloody, they shame victory in her pride I know some signs of the sky, I have noted them ever since childhood God watch that sail! Oh, guard it!

The wind shifts to the west Peace, peace, Banshee—"keening" at every window! It will rise—it will swell—it shrieks out long wander as I may through the house this night, I cannot lull the blast The advancing hours make it strong, by midnight all sleepless watchers hear and fear a wild south-west storm

That storm roared frenzied for seven days It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewed with wrecks, it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance Not till the destroying angel of tempest had achieved his perfect work would he fold the wings whose waft was thunder—the tremor of whose plumes was storm

Peace, be still! Oh, a thousand weepers prying in agony on waiting shores, listened for that voice, but it was not uttered—not uttered till, when the hush came, some could not feel it till when the sun returned his light was night to some

Now for the other, only adding to the observations on both made above, that in the piece just quoted there is a notable, and doubtless not unintended, lack of *continuous*

rhythm, it consists chiefly of short and mostly iambic and trochaic fragments, which look like crumbled blank verse. The large flowing movements of the greater prose are absent from it. In what comes next there is a nearer approach to them.

These pictures were in water colours. The first represented clouds, low, livid, rolling over a swollen sea. All the distance was in eclipse, so, too, was the foreground, or rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam, its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems, that I had touched with as brilliant tints as my palette could yield, and as glittering distinctness as my pencil could impart. Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water: a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn.

The second picture contained, for foreground, only the dim peak of a hill with grass and some leaves slanting as if by a breeze. Beyond and above spread an expanse of sky, dark blue as at twilight. Rising into the sky was a woman's shape to the bust, portrayed in tints as dusk and soft as I could combine. The dim forehead was crowned with a star, the lineaments below were seen as through the suffusion of vapour, the eyes shone dark and wild, the hair streamed shadowy, like a beamless cloud torn by storm or by electric travail. On the neck lay a pale reflection like moonlight, the same faint lustre touched the train of thin clouds from which rose and bowed this vision of the Evening Star.

The third showed the pinnacle of an iceberg piercing a polar winter sky, a muster of northern lights reared their dim lances, close serried along the horizon. Throwing these into distance, rose, in the foreground, a head—a colossal head, inclined towards the iceberg, and resting against it. Two thin hands, joined under the forehead, and supporting it, drew up before the lower features a sable veil, a brow quite bloodless, white as bone, and an eye hollow and fixed, blank of meaning but for the glassiness of despair, alone were visible. Above the temples amidst wreathed turban folds of black drapery, vague in its character and consistency as cloud, gleamed a ring of white flame, gemmed with sparkles of a more lurid tinge. This pale crescent was “the likeness of a Kingly Crown”, what it diademed was “the shape which shape had none”.

“George Eliot’s” later quasi-scientific jargon was not so *arrhythmic* as it was in other ways *inartistic*, but it hardly needs exemplification here. One well-known and justly favourite passage of the earlier and

better time will show a more than ordinary deftness of intensified rhythm-doses, here and there, in otherwise ordinary style

But the cōmplēte | tōrpōr | cāme | āt lāst | thē fīngērs | lōst |  
 thēir tēnsion, | thē ārms | ūnbēnt, | thēn | thē līt̄le hēad | fēll  
 āwāy | frōm thē bōsōm, | ānd thē blūe ēyes | ōpēned | wīde | ōn  
 thē cōld | stārlīght At first there was a little peevish cry of  
 "mammy," and an effort to regain the pillowing arm and bosom,  
 but mammy's ear was deaf, and the pillow seemed to be slipping  
 away backward Suddenly, as the child rolled downward on its  
 mother's knees, all wet with snow, its eyes were caught by a bright  
 glancing light on the white ground, and with the ready transition of  
 infancy, it was immediately absorbed in watching the bright living  
 thing running towards it, yet never arriving That bright living  
 thing must be caught, and in an instant the child had slipped on  
 all fours, and held out one little hand to catch the gleam But the  
 gleam would not be caught in that way, and now the head was held  
 up to see where the cunning gleam came from It came from a  
 very bright place, and the little one rising on its legs, toddled  
 through the snow, the old grimy shawl in which it was wrapped  
 trailing behind it, and the queer little bonnet dangling at its back—  
 toddled on to the open door of Silas Marner's cottage, and right up  
 to the warm hearth, where there was a bright fire of logs and sticks,  
 which had thoroughly warmed the old sack (Silas's greatcoat) spread  
 out on the bricks to dry The little one, accustomed to be left to  
 itself for long hours without notice from its mother, squatted down  
 on the sack, and spread its tiny hands towards the blaze, in perfect  
 contentment, gurgling and making many inarticulate communications  
 to the cheerful fire, like a new-hatched gosling beginning to find  
 itself comfortable But prēsēntly | thē wārmth | hād ā lūllīng |  
 ēffēct, | ānd thē līt̄le | gōldēn | hēad | sānk dōwn | ōn thē ōld |  
 sāck, | ānd thē blūe ēyes | wēre vēiled | bȳ thēir dēlicāte | hālf-  
 trānsparēnt | līds

It was, as most people know, the fate of Mr Froude to attract—whether in all or in any cases by his own fault matters nothing here—opprobrium from the most opposite quarters Even where one would think him least assailable, from the side of style, there have not been wanting assailants "Slipshod," "journalese," and so forth, are words I have heard uttered, and seen written, to

his address, and that, too, from persons who neither revenged *The Nemesis of Faith*, nor formed part of the chorus of Furies of which Mr Freeman was coryphee, nor partook of the probably mistaken but not unrespectable resentment aroused by his management of the Carlyle documents. I do not think the reproaches were ever just, though the singular carelessness which he always exhibited as to fact—a carelessness often shown to the positive damage of his own case, and therefore evidently not dishonest as to others—may sometimes have extended to his writing. Certainly, by far the greater part of that writing, from the exquisite crispness of the *Cat's Pilgrimage* to the more formal rhetoric of the *History*, and almost all the rest, is that of a great master of style. And one famous passage—which has justly become part of the “ordinary” of the prose anthologist, but which is all the more suitable for us—attains a beauty scarcely inferior to that of anything given within the covers of this book, perhaps not to that of anything to be found outside of them.

For, indeed, | a change | was coming | upon the world, | the  
meaning | and direction | of which | even still | is hidden | from us, |  
a change | from era | to era | The paths | trodden | by the footsteps |  
of ages | were broken up, | old things | were passing | away, | and  
the faith | and the life | of ten | centuries | were dissolving | like a  
dream | Chivalry | was dying, | the abbey | and the castle | were  
soon | together | to crumble | into ruins, | and all | the forms, |  
desires, | beliefs, | convictions | of the old world | were passing  
away, | never | to return | A new | continent | had risen up | be  
yond | the western | sea | The floor | of heaven, | inlaid with  
stars, | had sunk back | into an infinite | abyss of | immeasurable |  
space, | and the firm | earth | itself, | unfixed | from its founda-  
tions, | was seen | to be but a small | atom | in the awful | vast  
ness | of the universe | In the fabric | of habit | which they had

so | labōriously | built for thēmselves, | mānkīnd | wēre tō remāin |  
no longer

And now | it is all | gone— | like an un|substantial | pageant |  
faded, | and between us | and the old | English | there lies | a gulf |  
of mystery | which the prose | of the historian | will never | ade-  
quately | bridge | They cannot | come | to us, | and ow | imaginā-  
tion | can but feebly | penetrate | to them | Only | among the aisles |  
of our cathedrals, | only | as we gaze | upon their silent | figures |  
sleeping | on their tombs, | some faint | conceptions | float | before  
us | of what | these men | were | when they were alive, | and  
perhaps | in the sound | of church bells, | that peculiar | creation |  
of the mediæval | age, | which falls | upon the ear | like the echo | of  
a vanished | world

This exquisite passage is evidently to some extent a hybrid between the "standard" and the new "Corinthian" style, nay, we can go nearer to the fact, and say that it is in a way, though not in the least a copy of either, a hybrid between Newman and Ruskin. It has, as we observed above, something of the clear, cool, silvery note of the former, variegated and flourished up, but still recognisable. It has, if not borrowed, paralleled not a few of its *floriture* from or with the other, and in particular we may note not merely one but two consecutive drops into blank verse—

Had risen up beyond the western sea  
The floor of heaven, inland with stars, had sunk—

though, as in Ruskin himself, the too obtrusive effect is cleverly "passed" or masked. But another note, far older than either Newman or Ruskin, is present—that ubiquity, or at any rate frequency, of the Ionic *a minore* or third pæon (they are usually very difficult to distinguish in our tongue) which has such melodious influence, and which seems to acquire special effect from being followed or preceded by certain other feet

The most distinguished writer who, in age, in University membership, in influence on "mid-Victorian" times, and in other ways yet, forms a sort of triad with Ruskin and Froude—I have to the knowing named Matthew Arnold—occupies, from our point of view, a rather singular position. It is well known from external testimony, and could have been easily discovered from internal evidence, that Mr Arnold took a great deal of trouble with his prose—indeed relatively, if not positively also, more than with his verse. You never find in the *Essays* the irritating and sometimes almost incredible slips of carelessness or bluntness of taste that frequently mar the *Poems*, and a positively ill-sounding clause is very much harder to find than such strange combinations of cacophony and absurdity in line as, for instance—

Have felt their huge frames not constructed right

For this reason or that, however—and it would not be difficult to suggest more than one or two,—he hardly ever so much as attempted symphony or polyphony in prose—even the famous and never-to-be-forgotten *epiphonema* to Oxford has probably less of either than any other writer of his rank would have given to it. And as a general rule he abstains altogether from the smallest touch of distinctly "numerous" prose. His earlier manner,<sup>1</sup> indeed, is merely of the best of that variation of the "standard" which may almost be said to be peculiar to Oxford, and which we find in Oxonian contemporaries so different as Newman and Mansel.

But later, while assuming, at any rate very often, a tone of conversational lightness, he affected, almost always, a system of selection of word and phrase which, one may almost say, was intended to do duty for rhythm proper. It threw back, in some degree, to that peculiarity of the oratorical style of the eighteenth century which we noticed, and which consisted in arranging runs of comparatively unaccented syllable-batches, relieved from insignificance by the presence of strongly stressed conclu-

<sup>1</sup> No better example of it, or of its kind generally, can be found than the well known Preface to the *Poems* of 1853.

sions in clause and sentence But it took considerable liberties with this principle, and indulged in what, I fear, the eighteenth century itself would have unhesitatingly, and in a certain sense irrefutably, stigmatised as flat tautology Of its object we need not talk much it was intended, no doubt, to attract, and, till it teases too much, it is undoubtedly successful in attracting, attention to the theme But it must be quite evident that the writer either thinks nothing of mere pleasantness of sound, or (in places at least) deliberately disregards it in order to attain this object He makes, once more, a sort of return to balance as his one machine of rhythmical appeal, but it is a balance not merely double as usually, or treble as in Johnson and others, but polycentred, the repeated words being the pivots<sup>1</sup>

Let me remark, however, that not only in *the moral sphere*, but also in *the intellectual and spiritual sphere*, *energy* and *honesty* are most important and fruitful qualities, that, for instance, of what we call *genius energy* is the most essential part So, by assigning to a *nation energy* and *honesty* as its chief spiritual characteristics,—by refusing to it, as at all eminent characteristics, *openness of mind* and *flexibility of intelligence*,—we do not by any means, as some people might at first suppose, relegate its importance and its power of manifesting itself with effect from *the intellectual to the moral sphere* We only indicate its probable special line of successful activity in *the intellectual sphere*, and, it is true, certain imperfections and failings to which, in this *sphere*, it will always be subject *Genius* is mainly an affair of *energy*, and *poetry* is mainly an affair of *genius*, therefore, a *nation whose spirit is characterised by energy* may well be eminent in *poetry*,—and we have Shakespeare Again, the highest reach of *science* is, one may say, an inventive power, a faculty of divination, akin to the highest power exercised in *poetry*, therefore, a *nation whose spirit is characterised by energy* may well be eminent in *science*,—and we have Newton Shakespeare and Newton in *the intellectual sphere* there can be no higher names And what that *energy*, which is the life of *genius*, above everything demands and insists upon, is freedom, entire independence of all authority, prescription, and routine—the fullest room to expand as it will Therefore, a *nation whose chief spiritual characteristic is energy* will

---

<sup>1</sup> It has also, of course, no slight relation to the system specially remarkable in Dryden, of dotting the same word at different places of succeeding verses (*v Hist Pros* II 364) But, for obvious reasons, it has quite a different effect

not be very apt to set up, in intellectual matters, a fixed standard, an authority, like an academy. The form, the method of evolution, the precision, the proportion, the relation of the parts to the whole, in an intellectual work, depend mainly upon them. And these are the elements of an intellectual work which are really most communicable from it, which can most be learned and adopted from it, which have, therefore, the greatest effect upon the intellectual performance of others. Even in poetry these requisites are very important, and the poetry of a nation, not eminent for the gifts on which they depend, will more or less suffer by this shortcoming. In poetry, however, they are, after all, secondary, and energy is the first thing, but in prose they are of first rate importance. In its prose literature, therefore, and in the routine of intellectual work generally, a nation with no particular gifts for these will not be so successful. These are what, as I have said, can to a certain degree be learned and appropriated, while the free activity of genius cannot. Academies consecrate and maintain them, and, therefore, a nation with an eminent turn for them naturally establishes academies. So far as routine and authority tend to embarrass energy and inventive genius, academies may be said to be obstructive to energy and inventive genius, and, to this extent, to the human spirit's general advance. But then this evil is so much compensated by the propagation, on a large scale, of the mental aptitudes and demands which an open mind and a flexible intelligence naturally engender, genius itself, in the long run, so greatly finds its account in this propagation, and bodies like the French Academy have such power for promoting it, that the general advance of the human spirit is perhaps, on the whole, rather furthered than impeded by their existence.

If I were asked where English poetry got these three things, its turn for style, its turn for melancholy, and its turn for natural magic, for catching and rendering the charm of nature in a wonderfully near and vivid way, I should answer with some doubt, that it got much of its turn for style *from a Celtic source*, with less doubt, that it got much of its melancholy *from a Celtic source*, with no doubt at all, that *from a Celtic source* it got nearly all its natural magic.

Any German with penetration and tact in matters of literary criticism will own that the principal deficiency of German poetry is *in style*, that *for style*, in the highest sense, it shows but little feeling. Take the eminent masters *of style*, the poets who best give the idea of what the peculiar power which lies *in style* is,—Pindar, Virgil, Dante, Milton. *An example* of the peculiar effect which these poets produce, *you can hardly give from German poetry. Examples enough you can give from German poetry* of the effect produced by genius, thought, and feeling expressing themselves in clear *language*, simple *language*, passionate *language*, eloquent



*language*, with harmony and melody, but not of the peculiar effect exercised by eminent power of style. Every reader of Dante can at once call to mind what the peculiar effect I mean is, I spoke of it in my lectures on translating Homer, and there I took an example of it from Dante, who perhaps manifests it more eminently than any other poet. But from Milton, too, one may take examples of it abundantly, compare this from Milton—

Nor sometimes forget  
Those other two, equal with me in fate,—  
So were I equal'd with them in renown,—  
Blind Thamyras and blind Mæonides,

with this from Goethe—

Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,  
Sich ein Character in dem Strom der Welt

Nothing can be better in its way than *the style* in which Goethe there presents his thought, but it is *the style* of prose as much as of poetry, it is lucid, harmonious, earnest, eloquent, but it has not received that peculiar kneading, heightening, and recasting which is observable in *the style* of the passage from Milton,—*a style* which seems to have for its cause a certain pressure of emotion, and an ever surging, yet bridled excitement in the poet, giving a special intensity to his way of delivering himself. In poetical races and epochs this turn *for style* is peculiarly observable, and perhaps it is only on condition of having this somewhat heightened and difficult manner, so different from the plain manner of prose, that poetry gets the privilege of being loosed, at its best moments, into that perfectly simple, lumpid *style*, which is the supreme *style* of all, but the *simplicity* of which is still not the *simplicity* of prose. The *simplicity* of Menander's style is the *simplicity* of prose, and is the same kind of *simplicity* as that which Goethe's style, in the passage I have quoted, exhibits, but Menander does not belong to a great poetical moment, he comes too late for it, it is the *simple passages* in poets like Pindar or Dante which are perfect, being masterpieces of poetical *simplicity*. One may say the same of the *simple passages* in Shakespeare, they are perfect, their simplicity being a poetical *simplicity*. They are the golden, easeful, crowning moments of *a manner* which is always pitched in another key from that of prose, *a manner* changed and heightened, the Elizabethan style, regnant in most of our dramatic poetry to this day, is mainly the continuation of this *manner* of Shakespeare's. It was a *manner* much more turbid and strown with blemishes than *the manner* of Pindar, Dante, or Milton, often it was detestable, but it owed its existence to Shakespeare's instinctive impulse towards *style* in poetry, to his native sense of the necessity for it, and without the basis *of style* everywhere, faulty though it may in some places be, we should not have had the beauty of expression, unsurpassable for effectiveness and charm, which is reached in Shakespeare's best passages. The

turn *for style* is perceptible all through English poetry, proving, to my mind, the genuine poetical gift of the race, this turn imparts to our poetry a stamp of high distinction, and sometimes it doubles the force of a poet not by nature of the very highest order, such as Gray, and raises him to a rank beyond what his natural richness and power seem to promise

Now the clauses and sentences of these passages are not inharmonious, but it becomes difficult to attend to any harmony that they have individually, and all but impossible to put it together as symphonic, because of the perpetual carillon-accompaniment (but not a *carillon* means a tune—let us say, the perpetual unsystematised change-ringing) of the stressed word-bells or word-group-bells. If you attend to sound only or mainly, the echo of “energy,” “honesty,” “nation,” “genius,” “intellectual and moral sphere,” of “style,” “simplicity,” “manner,” produces an almost stunning clash and jangle. If you muffle the sound, and look only at the grammar, it would seem as if the writer had taken an oath never to use a pronoun, never to employ a periphrase or synonym, and to leave no single one of a group of adjectives without its single and special noun, as in “clear *language*, simple *language*, appropriate *language*, eloquent *language*” In the earlier examples (*v sup*), where he had not made up his mind to absolute monogamy in nouns, there is nothing of this. But in the later he has—no doubt quite in accordance with his general principles—somewhat sacrificed rhythm to inculcation, and measure to mannerism and controversial effect.

A fourth Oxford contemporary of the Ruskin-Arnold-Froude group—that *malleus* of innovators, and master of logical treatment, Dean Mansel—has been praised by a much younger prose magician of a wholly different school, Mr Pater himself, for “the literary beauty of closeness, and repression, with economy, of a fine rhetorical gift” The praise was well deserved, and I remember one of Mansel’s professorial lectures in the Hall of Magdalen (I do not know whether it was ever printed) which was the very finest example of the severer spoken prose, neither

too much observing nor too little regarding the laws of written, that I have heard I have forgotten, in the lapse of five and forty years, all but a few scraps<sup>1</sup>—hardly even complete sentences—of it, but the following extract reproduces, with extraordinary vividness, the key of it as it still rings, inarticulately but with perfect accomplishment of rhythm, in my memory's ear. All those who know the finest examples of seventeenth-century oratory of the sacred kind (such as the magnificent extract from Donne given above<sup>2</sup>) will recognise something of its probable origin, and I have little doubt that on Mansel, as on so many others of his time, the wand of Newman had had its influence. But there is no copying of anybody, there is not even the half-independent discipleship which we have often noted. The sweep and soar and swoop which Hooker had introduced into English is here carried on, with somewhat shorter and more varied flights, but with the same general aim at, and achievement of, a close, not exactly "dying"—the composition is too much alive, too virile, too sinewy, for that—but *requiescent*—creating and diffusing an atmosphere of peace, most definitely felt, no doubt, by those who also know the shock of the author's dialectic, and the piercing thrust of his satire, but surely perceptible to all.

In His moral | attributes, | no less | than in the rest | of His  
infinite Being, | God's judgments | are | unsearchable, | and His  
ways | past finding | out | While He | manifests | Himself |  
clearly | as a moral | governor | and legislator, | by the witness | of  
the moral | law | which He | has established | in the hearts | of  
men, | we cannot | help feeling | at the same time, | that that law, |  
grand as it is, | is no measure | of His grandeur, | that He Himself |  
is beyond it, | though not | opposed to it, | distinct, | though not |  
alien | from it | We feel | that He | who planted | in man's con-

<sup>1</sup> For one from 1 sermon—not a lecture—*msf*, p. 469

<sup>2</sup> Page 162

science | that stern | unyielding | imperative | of duty, | must Him-  
 self | be true | and righteous | altogether, | that He from Whom | all  
 holy desires, | all good counsels, | and all just works | do proceed, |  
 must Himself | be more holy, | more good, | more just | than these |  
 But when | we try | to realise | in thought | this sure | conviction |  
 of our faith, | we find | that here, | as everywhere, | the finite |  
 cannot | fathom | the infinite, | that, while | in our hearts | we  
 believe, | yet our thoughts | at times | are sore troubled | It is con-  
 sonant | to the whole | analogy | of our earthly | state | of trial, |  
 that, in this | as in other | features | of God's | providence, | we  
 should meet | with things | impossible | to understand | and difficult |  
 to believe, | by which | reason | is baffled | and faith tried, — | acts |  
 whose purpose | we see not, | dispensations | whose wisdom | is  
 above us, | thoughts | which are not | our thoughts, | and ways |  
 which are not | our ways | In these things | we hear, as it were, |  
 the same | loving | voice | which spoke | to the wondering | disciple |  
 of old "What I do, | thou knowest not | now, | but thou shalt  
 know | hereafter" | The luminary | by whose influence | the ebb |  
 and flow | of man's moral | being | is regulated, | moves around |  
 and along | with man's | little | world | in a regular | and bounded |  
 orbit | one side, | and one side | only, | looks downwards | upon its  
 earthly | centre, | the other, | which we see not, | is ever | turned  
 upwards | to the all-surrounding | Infinite | And those tides |  
 have their seasons | of rise | and fall, | their places | of strength and  
 weakness, | and that light | waxes | and wanes | with the growth | or  
 decay | of man's mental | and moral | and religious | culture, and  
 its borrowed | rays | seem | at times | to shine | as with their own |  
 lustre, in rivalry, | even | in opposition, | to the source | from which |  
 they emanate | Yet is that light | still | but a faint | and partial |  
 reflection | of the hidden | glories | of the Sun | of Righteousness, |

wait̄ing | but the bright̄er | illūmin̄ation | of H̄is pres̄ence | to fad̄e |  
 and b̄e swall̄owed up | in the full | blaz̄e | of the heav̄en | kindl̄ing |  
 ar̄ound it,— | not cast down | ind̄eed | from its orb̄it, | nor sh̄orn |  
 of its true bright̄ness | and inflūence, | but still | felt | and ack̄now-  
 ledḡed | in its r̄eal | exist̄ence | and pow̄er | in the mem̄ory | of the  
 past | discipl̄ine, | in the product | of the pres̄ent | perf̄ectness,—  
 though now | distinct | no more, | but van̄ish̄ing | from sight | to b̄e  
 mad̄e one | with the gl̄ory | that beam̄s | from the “Fath̄er | of  
 light̄s, | with whom | is no | variab̄leness, | neither | shad̄ow | of  
 turn̄ing ”<sup>1</sup>

One has seen it, of course, insinuated, or definitely alleged, that prose of this kind owes its attraction to the scrap-sugar-plums—the *bribes*, as by a sort of bilingual pun one might call them at once in French and English—of the all-sweetening phrase of the Authorised Version, which are scattered about it. It is not necessary to call the remark ungenerous, for it does not reach that sphere of censure, it can be at once dismissed as utterly uncritical. If those who make it would kindly try the experiment, they would very rapidly find what a dangerous one it is, and how extremely likely the borrower is to be “undone by his auxiliary.” Nor, though he manages with perfect artistry to “write up” to what he borrows, is the general cadence of Mansel’s original composition by any means very Biblical. It is rather the balance of the standard style, adjusted and enriched with peculiar, though unostentatious, adroitness. “In the memory of the past discipline, in the product of the present perfectness”—where the coupling and counterbalancing dactyls of the clause-endings are led up to, in one case, by a dochmiac and an anapæst, in the other by a third pæon or Ionic *a minore* repeated, after a fashion reminding one

<sup>1</sup> I have rarely, to use the critical slang of the day, found the plan of scansion so “convincing” and so inevitable as here. One’s pen can hardly keep up with the demand of the feet to be marked, as they march past to their own grave but triumphant and unmistakable music.

of the Miltonic device of selecting epithets of different value for pairs of corresponding nouns—is a phrase hardly to be excelled in the quieter *numerosity*, though, in truth, the whole passage is full of such things, which unite themselves, in the larger effects, with an almost consummate beauty

But the writer who has been cited as a praiser of Mansel is, beyond all question from our point of view, the most remarkable of those belonging to the last division of the nineteenth century. For all but forty years, and (though some of his children may not know it) to the present moment, Mr Pater has been the father of all such as essay to write delicately, just as Mr Meredith has been the father of all those who try to write enigmatically. That in each case the *famille* has been often rather *deplorable*,<sup>1</sup> and that the intermarriage between the two styles has sometimes produced monsters of the most unlovely kind, may be perfectly true. But because the children too frequently set other people's teeth on edge, it does not follow that the grapes which the fathers ate were sour. Those of Mr Pater's vineyard most certainly were not.

To carry the pedigree upwards instead of downwards (and in good sooth it is the more gracious procession), there can be no doubt that Pater represents another result of that Ruskin-Newman blend which we have already noted in Froude, but which was far more deliberately, extensively, and decoratively carried out on the south side than on the north of Brasenose Lane. If there is one thing which, more than another, can be justly urged against Ruskin, it is the absence of quiet. If there is one thing, more than another, that may be put to the credit of Pater, it is the presence thereof. On this apex, of English prose, if on no other, there is Rest.

This seems to me so much the instinctive and dis-

<sup>1</sup> The old joke on Diderot's *Père de famille* and the imitations of it. To myself the explained allusion is nearly as detestable as the explained super-natural, but I am told that the public thinks differently.

tinctive character of his rhythm that I have not chosen, to illustrate it, the usual purple panel (for one cannot insult it by calling it a "patch") of the "Gioconda,"<sup>1</sup> in which, fine as it is, there is just the slightest hint of an intention to "set the trumpet to the lips and blow" Another passage of the same essay, if less definitely rounded off, seems to me preferable, and I think that it, with yet another from *Marius*, will suffice But it must always be remembered that the care of the paragraph was one of Mr Pater's first and greatest anxieties, when I remarked on it, in the *Fortnightly* essay referred to in the Preface of this book, he wrote to me expressing special gratification, and acknowledging that it had been one of his principal objects But his paragraph was not, as too many people are under the delusion that a paragraph must necessarily be, brought to some deeply marked, insistent, peremptorily "concluding" end He liked—and he had a marvellous faculty in doing it—to drop off at this end with a new sort of modified *aposiopesis*, replacing the actual abruptness of that figure by a gentle glide However, to the examples

The movement | of the fifteenth | century | was twofold, | partly |  
 the Renaissance, | partly | also | the coming | of what is called | the  
 modern spirit | with its realism, | its appeal | to experience, | it  
 comprehended | a return | to antiquity, | and a return | to nature |  
 Raffaëlle | represents the return | to antiquity, | and Lionardo | the  
 return | to nature In this return | to nature | he was seeking | to  
 satisfy | a boundless | curiosity | by her | perpetual | surprises, | a  
 microscopic | sense | of finish | by her finesse | of delicacy | of  
 operation, | that *subtilitas* | *naturæ* | which Bacon | notices | So | we

<sup>1</sup> "The presence that thus so strangely rose beside the waters," etc (*Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London, 1873), p 118) Any one who cares to look it up, or, remembering it, analyses his remembrance, will find that Ilioth foot, the minor Ionic (with its attendant dochmiac, the penultimate long, and amphibrach, for longer and shorter variation), as prevalent as usual

find him | often | in intimate | relations | with men | of science, |  
 with Fra | Luca | Paccioli, | the mathe|matician, | and the anatomist |  
 Marc Antonio | della Torre | His observations | and experiments |  
 fill | thirteen | volumes | of manuscript, | and those | who can  
 judge | describe him as | anticipating | long before, | by rapid |  
 intuition, | the late | ideas | of science | He explained | the  
 obscure | light | of the unillu|minated part | of the moon, | knew |  
 that the sea | had once covered | the mountains | which contain |  
 shells, | and the gathering | of the equatorial | waters | above | the  
 polar

He | who thus | penetrated | into | the most secret | parts | of  
 nature | preferred | always | the more | to the less | remote, | what, |  
 seeming | exceptional, was an instance | of law | more refined, | the  
 construction | about things | of a peculiar | atmosphere | and mixed |  
 lights | He paints | flowers | with such curious | felicity | that  
 different | writers | have attributed | to him | a fondness | for  
 particular | flowers, | as Clement | the cyclamen, | and Rio | the  
 jasmine, | while at Venice | there is | a stray leaf | from his port  
 folio | dotted | all over | with studies | of violets | and the wild rose  
 In him | first appears | the taste | for what | is *bizarre* | or *recherché* |  
 in landscape, | hollow | places | full | of the green | shadow | of  
 bituminous | rocks, | ridged | reefs | of trap rock | which cut | the  
 water | into quaint | sheets | of light— | their exact | antitype | is  
 in | our own | western | seas, | all | solemn | effects | of moving |  
 water, | you may follow | it springing | from its distant | source |  
 among the rocks | on the heath | of the "Madonna | of the Balances," |  
 passing | as a little | fall | into | the treacherous | calm | of the  
 "Madonna | of the Lake," | next, | as a goodly | river | below | the  
 cliffs | of the "Madonna | of the Rocks," | washing | the white | walls |  
 of its distant | villages, | stealing | out | in a network | of divided |



streams | in "La Gioconda" | to the sea shore | of the "Saint Anne"—  
that delicate | place | where the wind | passes | like the hand | of  
some | fine etcher | over | the surface, | and the untorn | shells | lie  
thick | upon the sand, | and the tops | of the rocks, | to which the  
waves | never rise, | are green | with grass | grown fine | as hair  
It is the landscape, | not | of dreams | or of fancy, | but of places |  
far withdrawn, | and hours | selected | from a thousand | with a  
miracle | of finesse | Through his | strange veil | of sight | things  
reach | him so, | in no | ordinary | night | or day, | but as | in faint  
light | of eclipse, | or in some | brief interval | of falling | rain | at  
daybreak, | or through | deep water

There is scarcely, I think, in all the examples given in this book, one more profitable for study, in gross and in detail, than this. It is my purpose only to give hints and outlines for such a study here. The scansion contains the whole of it, in what should, by this time, be sufficiently readable shorthand. The first paragraph, to a hasty reader, whose attention has not been drawn to that scansion, may contain nothing, or hardly anything, structurally or superficially different, not merely from the "standard" style of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century, but from the whole general construction and ordonnance of the more orderly English prose since Dryden or Temple. The diction itself is neither positively modern nor definitely archaic. Except a possible suspicion of the Arnoldian "What I tell you three times is true,"<sup>1</sup> there is nothing that even approaches a trick, and in particular there is not, I think, a single instance of that peculiar picturesque or imaginative *catachresis* of words—that introduction of them with a slightly new meaning, and in slightly unexpected company—which was begun by Donne and Browne and their satellites, which disappeared with the "school of prose and sense" in prose as well as in

<sup>1</sup> "Return to antiquity," "return to nature." And here Major Pendennis might interject, "It was only *twice*, sir!"

verse, and which, recovering itself and its powers with the Romantics, reached in different ways its furthest reasonably possible with Mr Pater himself and Mr Meredith. Even Conyers Middleton could, as far as this paragraph is concerned, have found no things that he might not with all grace of congruity have thought, nor any words that he might not, with equal grace, have written.

But the things, though he might have thought them, would not have 'reached' Conyers so, and the words, though they might have come from his pen, would have been arranged by it in a very different manner. We have seen that in the seventeenth-eighteenth-century sober style, though you can apply the system of quantitative scansion—as you can to almost everything spoken or written by an educated Englishman—the process has, in differing degrees, but more or less uniformly in kind, a certain air of superfluity and unnaturalness. It neither evolves nor explains any music: it merely shows that there is little or none to be explained or evolved. Here it is entirely different. The application of the test at once interprets that difference of the general rhythm which a merely faithful reading must have intimated already to ear or body or ear of mind. That mysterious consonance or symphony—the existence of which I have been tracing, if I do not pretend to have mastered the complete secrets of its counterpoint—is here, as it is *not* in Conyers Middleton. And the partition and quantification justify themselves, in this instance, as clearly as, in that, they were felt to be things out of place.

But in the second paragraph a further, a more obvious, but a much more dazzling and wonderful transformation is effected. The cunning, but simple and somewhat suppressed, harmony of the earlier writing extends and sublimates itself into polyphony, as unique and as original as anything that we have seen. The tone is still quiet—in fact the easy undulation of the first paragraph is exchanged for a much slower movement, with fewer pæons and dochmiacs, though both are thrown in for variety's sake, and especially to prevent the thing from

being too languid and too "precious" But most of the feet are trisyllabic, dissyllabic, or monosyllabic, and the clause-, sentence-, and paragraph-closes are distinguished by that curious muffled arrest which we have noticed—momentary suspension of movement without a jar—a sort of whispered "Hush!" Here, too, you get those slight idiosyncratic *diversions* of words (for catachresis, after all, is a bad name to throw at so beautiful a dog) to which allusions have been made above, and which affect rhythm so powerfully, though so quietly, by the slight shock they give to the understanding—"green shadow," "solemn water," "delicate place" Here, too, is the immixture of actual metre or suggestion of metre, but far more intricate and nuanced than in Ruskin or Kingsley,<sup>1</sup> together with undulations,<sup>2</sup> not definitely metrical, but infinitely subtler than those of Gibbon Yet all this is done without the least touch of such preliminary warning and advertisement as is frequent in De Quincey and Landor, and as may be seen perhaps even in his own longer passage on the "Gioconda" A new paradox suggests itself, to take place beside Dryden's old one of "silence invading the ear" Silence is blended with sound, and the charms of both invade and soothe the ear together

On this day truly no mysterious light, no irresistibly leading hand from afar, reached him, only, the peculiarly tranquil influence of its first hour increased steadily upon him in a manner with which, as he conceived, the aspects of the place he was then visiting had something to do The air there, air supposed to possess the singular property of restoring the whiteness of ivory, was pure and thin An even veil of lawn like white cloud had now drawn over the sky, and under its broad, shadowless light every hue and tone of time came out upon the yellow old temples, the elegant pillared circle of the shrine of the patronal Sibyl, the houses seemingly of a piece with the ancient fundamental rock Some half-conscious motive of poetic grace would appear to have determined their grouping, in part

---

<sup>1</sup> "And the un|torn shells | lie thick [up]on the sand,  
And the tops | of the rocks, [to] which the waves | never rise,  
Are green | with grass | grown fine | as hair"

<sup>2</sup> "And the gathering of the equatorial waters above the polar He  
who thus penetrated into the most secret parts of nature"

resisting, partly going along with, the natural wildness and harshness of the place, its floods and precipices. An air of immense age possessed, above all, the vegetation around—a world of evergreen trees—the olives especially, older than how many generations of men's lives<sup>1</sup> fretted and twisted by the combining forces of life and death into every conceivable caprice of form. In the windless weather all seemed to be listening to the roar of the immemorial waterfall, plunging down so unassociably among these human habitations, and with a motion so unchanging from age to age as to count, even in this time worn place, as an image of unalterable rest. Yet the clear sky all but broke to let through the ray which was silently quickening everything in the late February afternoon, and the unseen violet refined itself through the air. It was as if the spirit of life in nature were but withholding any too precipitate revelation of itself, in its slow, wise, maturing work.

This second passage, as it seems to me, occupies, with remarkable exactness, a middle place, in point of rhythm, between the first and second paragraphs of the other. I have not scanned it, though, as I read it, I can see the scansion just as clearly as if I had a proof of it with the quantity-marks lying before me. It is evidently on something the same level as the fine pieces of description that we gave from De Quincey and Landor earlier—it is not so uniquely or insistently Paterian as the instances of the curiosity of Lionardo, but it retains enough of its creator's quality to exhibit that quality pretty clearly. The possibility of "roar" imaging "rest"—as subtle as it is obvious<sup>1</sup> and true—is itself something of a key-note, or at least a key. I wish he had not written "elegant"—a word which seems to me to have been so irretrievably "sullied by ignoble use" that, except for technical purposes, or used deliberately *in malam partem*, it should be left to bleach itself by time's kind office for at least a century or two. Otherwise the thing is faultless—as things in the middle style should be, though those in the very highest need or should not.

Nothing, yet once more, could be easier, or more delightful to me, than to multiply extracts from Mr Pater, but, as I have striven to make clear, this is not,

<sup>1</sup> The subtlety of the obvious is what some innocent decriers of that same are incapable of seeing.

primarily, a Book of Beauties. His methods were, of course, methods—if not exactly “aleatory,” for they required as much calculation as chess—certainly perilous, and he did not always show himself master of them. Some early “turns” in the *Studies* he cancelled, and in the latest books, from *Gaston de Latour* onwards (though I think the accusation of “slovenliness,” which I have heard made by some critics, is unjust) it is certain that they did not always “come off.” In particular, the demon of burlesque suggestion pretty early marked his prey, and got it once or twice in Mr Pater himself, constantly in Mr Pater’s imitators. A sentence of one of the earliest of these, the late Mr Frederick Myers—“to trace the passion and the anguish which whirl along some lurid vista toward a sun that sets in storm, or gaze across silent squares by summer moonlight amid a smell of dust and flowers,”<sup>1</sup> is just a little dangerous in itself. And it was suggested at the time by an urbane critic, that the rhythm would be positively improved, and the sense not materially damaged, if you read “gaze by moonlight across summer dust and flowers amid a smell of silent squares.” Here perhaps, even more than elsewhere, the way to Hell is hard by the gate of Heaven, yet we need scarcely be less grateful to those who open to us the ports of salvation.

No one with the slightest interest in literature can require to be told that Mr Swinburne could, from his own prose writings alone, supply material for a very elaborate dissertation on prose rhythm. Indeed, it is one of the “Dick Minim” criticisms respecting him that he confused the limits of the two harmonies, and that, in the one as in the other, he pushed the exuberance of his language beyond the permitted verge of either. From the first his virtuosity in the “numerous” kind was evident, and it was evident, likewise, who were his masters. To two of

<sup>1</sup> The context of this remarkable *floritura* cannot be said to lessen its risk of frigidity, for it is a description of the way in which William Wordsworth did *not* regard London.

them—Carlyle and Newman—he has paid magnificent *θρέπτρα*<sup>1</sup> in his adaptation of the final chorus of the *Eumenides*. I do not at the moment remember any similar passage about Mr Ruskin. But no reader of the *Blake*, when it appeared, could possibly avoid seeing the debt, of suggestion at least, to *Modern Painters*. I have never known whether the following remarkable passage was written before or after that quoted above from Mr Pater—the dates of publication would prove nothing, for the author of the *Studies* was accustomed to exercise a thoroughly Horatian custody over his writings before he published them. And, when the two are examined, the resemblance will be found to be more superficial than essential. But, superficially, it certainly exists, and the Ruskinian connection, elsewhere more patent still, is less *idiosyncratised* than in Pater.

There is, in all these straying songs, the freshness of clear wind, and purity of blowing rain, here a perfume as of dew or grass against the sun, there a keener smell of sprinkled shingle and brine bleached sand, some growth or breath everywhere of blade or herb leaping into life under the green wet light of spring, some colour of shapely cloud or mound of moulded wave. The verse pauses and musters, and falls always as a wave does, with the same patience of gathering form and rounded glory of springing curve, and sharp, sweet flash of dishevelled and flickering foam, as it curls over, showing the sun through its soft heaving side in veins of gold that inscribe, and jewels of green that inlay, the quivering and sundering skirt or veil of thinner water, throwing upon the tremulous space of narrowing sea in front, like a reflection of lifted and vibrating hair, the windy shadow of its shaken spray.<sup>2</sup>

There, of course, the last clause is a pure blank-verse line, as naked, as unblushing, and as beautiful as the

<sup>1</sup> For we care nothing about his disagreement with their principles, and the tribute paid to "the eternal substance of their greatness" is of the amplest, all the ampler for the difference of views. The piece referred to is the "Two Leaders" (they are not named, but unmistakable) of the second *Poems and Ballads* (1878). There are, of course, plenty of spits and spurts at Carlyle, especially later, when Carlyle's own unadvised words about some of Mr Swinburne's darlings had been more unadvisedly published. But they do not disannul the earlier and nobler home sending, *οἱ εὐφρόνι πομπῆς*, of the great and honoured ones who were to him the children, to others the watchmen, of the night.

<sup>2</sup> *William Blake* (London, 1868) p. 134.

Aphrodite whom the context from which it rises suggests, while more than one or two or three others hide themselves, or half show themselves, as attendant Oceanides in the quivering veil. As for the diction and imagery, not merely would Vida—that immortal has put on a good deal of mortality, and does not matter much—class it with *crimes magnae genetricis* for “glass” as an awful example of too fanciful writing, but I fear that Aristotle would put it with the exercises of Lycophron, and that even Longinus would discover in it the *parenthyron*. But we are not as ancients were, and though in some respects they may have had the better of us, let us at least have the profits and the solace of our difference. We can take this as good if we choose, and if I had as many votes<sup>1</sup> for literature as the late Reverend Washbourne West of Lincoln College, Oxford, had for Parliament, I would give them all for its goodness.

The *Blake* is full of such things, though I think this is the best. It exhibits, and they all exhibit, that delight in alliteration which, again, Dick Minim sagely reprehends. But it shows a curious contrast to Pater and Newman—less to Ruskin and Carlyle—in its tendency to make the closes of clause, sentence, sentence-batch, and paragraph distinctly *emphatic*.<sup>2</sup> I hardly know a better combined example of these two tendencies in little than a phrase (I quote from memory, my copy of *Under the Microscope* having retired from ken at the moment) in which Mr Swinburne summed up part of the remarkable paper devoted just fifty years ago by Charles Baudelaire, to Wagner and *Tannhäuser*.<sup>3</sup>—the words “grown diabolic |

<sup>1</sup> I forget whether legend says fourteen or forty nine, it adds that they were selected with such foresight and ingenuity that they could all be exercised from Oxford in the course of an average general election. Mr West's character, in other respects, may not have been perfect (though I have heard that he was a much better fellow than Liberal party spirit among dons, and resentment of Proctorial excesses among undergraduates, used to declare him). But he certainly ought, since his votes were always given on the right side, to have a light time in Purgatory for this.

<sup>2</sup> Our earliest preceptist on prose rhythm would certainly have approved this. See App II.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal* vol. III, *L'Art Romantique* pp. 207-267 (Paris, 1868).

among a<sup>ˉ</sup>ges | that w<sup>ˉ</sup>ould n<sup>ˉ</sup>ot | a<sup>ˉ</sup>cept h<sup>ˉ</sup>er | a<sup>ˉ</sup>s d<sup>ˉ</sup>iv<sup>ˉ</sup>ine” In this phrase, perhaps, we get another glimpse of one of those panthers quested so long and caught so rarely—a capital example of prose rhythm of the elaborate kind, which lends its processes to pretty clear analysis. This phrase, it will be seen, descends in shortening magnitudes of feet, through dochmiac, third pæon, and amphibrach (a combination which, I think, almost deserves the designation of a “*prose-metre*”), and then continues in feet, trisyllabic, but different from the amphibrach,—bacchic (for I leave “*uxēpter*” to costermongers and phoneticians), anapæst. One of the main points in it is the length and fulness and hurry of the opening, with this descent, the level progress of the trisyllabic feet, and the clench of the ending “*divine*” That Mr Swinburne sometimes overdid this emphasis—that he indulged occasionally in an almost Kinglakean exaltation, in antithetic epigram, of the brass above the reeds and the strings, may be true. But nobody except Shelley, and perhaps Thackeray, has ever, in verse or prose, completely escaped turning a manner into a mannerism.

Yet besides the nineteenth-century influences, one of which has yet to be mentioned, there was another, conveyed perhaps partly through this postponed one, which was noticeable even in the *Blake* itself, and which became stronger and stronger. This was an almost Johnsonian tendency to antithesis and balance, sometimes couched in the shorter and more pithy form of the great lexicographer’s conversational style, and sometimes periodised into something very like a caricature of his most elaborate written manner. It may have come partly direct—for Mr Swinburne’s natural tendency to admire everything good in literature, and everything noble in life, got the better, in Johnson’s case as in others, of his adscititious crotchets, political and other. But I think it came also, and largely, from Landor, in respect to whom, and in respect of whom, nature and the crotchets rather unluckily



joined It is at any rate certain that the somewhat ponderous and occasionally overtoppling irony to which this style lends itself so easily, and which, when Mr Swinburne indulged in it, always used to send cold water down his admirers' backs, is much more Landorian than Johnsonian For the God of Humour—whose functions, I suppose, were held *in commendam* with his many others by Hermes in Greece, while nobody in Rome, except perhaps Plautus, Catullus, and Petronius could have found the way to his temple—never deserted Johnson, while he not only never visited Landor, but cruelly sent a lying spirit in his place<sup>1</sup>

This infusion, however, sometimes produced magnificent passages and constantly very happy fragments, it certainly often makes Mr Swinburne's prose rememberable beyond the wont of the usual nineteenth-century medium, the impressions of which, even when caressing and delightful, are apt to be faint It is unlucky, no doubt, that any man—let alone a great poet who could be, when he chose, almost as great a prose writer—should, not long after reproaching (justly enough) George Chapman with the clumsiness of his style, revenge himself (again justly enough) on a private enemy by such an appalling sentence as that quoted beneath<sup>2</sup> But "the brother-

<sup>1</sup> His conduct to Mr Swinburne himself was more capricious That poet could be both humorous and witty, but even his wit, and still more his humour, had the drawback of being exceedingly "undependable" The very light and good phrase about Chastelard and Queen Mary, "growing up to years of indiscretion" in Valois society, occurs on the same page of the *Miscellanies* with a sneer at the Jesuits, the point of which is not merely blunted, but absolutely swallowed up and lost, in a volume of verbiage

<sup>2</sup> It would not be fair to put it into the text But, for all the ninefold involution of its caricatured periodicity, it has a fine rhetorical swing, provided that breath and brain give you leave to last it out "Such a Crispinulus or Crispinaccio would have found his proper element in an atmosphere whose fumes should never have been inhaled by the haughty and high souled author of *The Postaster*, and, from behind his master's chan, with no need to seek, for fear if not for shame, the dastardly and lying shelter of a pseudonym which might at a pinch have been abjured, and the responsibility shifted from his own shoulders to those of a well meaning and invisible friend, the laurelled lackey of King James might as securely have launched his libels against the highest heads of poets to whom in that age all looked up, and who would have looked down on him, as ever did the illustrious Latinist Buchanan against the mother of the worthy patron whose countenance would

less Antigone of our stage" (for Cordelia) is almost *plusquam*-Landonian in its combined felicity of sense, and weight, and rhythm "That precious | waif | of pitiful | salvage | which we owe | to the happy | capacity | of a hungry | publisher" would not have been written exactly by the eighteenth-century Johnson, but I fancy that, if the passage was before his twentieth-century ghost, it may have said, when he met Mr Swinburne the other day, "Why, sir! it is pretty well, but you should not alliterate so much" And just below these words, the rhythmical secrets of the best Johnsonian style are hit in two consecutive sentences "The deeper complexities of the subject are merely indicated" "Simple and trenchant outlines of character are to be supplemented by features of subtler suggestion, and infinite interfusion"

In this style—composite indeed, but made a real "order" by his own genius—Mr Swinburne filled nearly half a score of volumes with a prose which as one re-reads it, sometimes after many years, sometimes after short intervals between former perusals, loses little if anything of its charm, and proves itself, as has been said, strangely rememberable and singularly remembered He could, when he chose, write with almost perfect simplicity, much in the review of Sir Walter Scott's *Journal*, and the "Recollections of Professor Jowett," which will be found opening the *Studies in Prose and Poetry*, could not be more free from *ampullae* of any kind than it is But this was when he was at once thoroughly interested in his subject, and not over-excited by it When he was at all in a rage, things were in a more parlous condition, but whenever he did not try to monkey, he even then wrote very finely Extreme admiration of the combative kind

---

probably have sufficed to protect the meanest and obscurest creature of his common and unclean favour against all recrimination on the part of Shakespeare or of Jonson, of Beaumont or of Webster, of Fletcher or of Chapman" One thinks of the exclamation of Mr Weller after the equally well deserved, and equally breath exhausting, chastisement of Stiggins, but the actual composition is all right, and the conduct of the cadence exemplary

was again perilous<sup>1</sup> I myself, *moi chetif*, think almost as highly of Hugo's poetry as he did But I confess that, in his Victorian commentings, one never knows whether there is to be such gorgeous prose-poetry as the overture of the review of *L'Homme qui rit*, which I shall proceed to quote, or such splutters as one which I shall not quote, but which may be found, by any one who chooses, face to face with the masterpiece, at the second page-opening of the *Essays and Studies*

Once only in my life I have seen the likeness of Victor Hugo's genius Crossing over when a boy, from Ostend, I had the fortune to be caught in mid channel by a thunderstorm strong enough to delay the packet some three good hours over the due time About midnight, the thundercloud was right overhead, full of incessant sound and fire, lightening and darkening so rapidly that it seemed to have life, and a delight in its life At the same hour, the sky was clear to the west, and all along the sea-line there sprang and sank, as to music, a restless dance or chase of summer lightnings across the lower sky, a race and riot of lights, beautiful and rapid as a course of shining Oceanides along the tremulous floor of the sea Eastward, at the same moment, the space of clear sky was higher and wider, a splendid semicircle of too intense purity to be called blue, it was of no colour nameable to man, and midway in it, between the storm and the sea, hung the motionless full moon, Artemis watching with a serene splendour of scorn the battle of Titans and the revel of nymphs, from her stainless and Olympian summit of divine, indifferent light Underneath and about us the sea was paved with lame, the whole water trembled and hissed with phosphoric fire, even through the wind and thunder I could hear the crackling and pattering of the water-sparks In the same heaven and at the same hour, there shone at once the three contrasted glories, golden and fiery and white, of moonlight and of the double lightnings, forked and sheet, and under all this miraculous heaven lay a laming floor of water<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A complete re-reading of the whole prose work, in chronological order, has only increased my own admiration, always great, for the extraordinary felicity, and the broad cast range, of Mr Swinburne's impartial judgments on English and other literature But when the ~~grazes~~ took him either way he was wont to mistake, in the language of Theodore Hook's fiendishly clever skit on poor Queen Caroline's mock court—

“Lord ——— for a man,  
For a maid, Lady Anne,  
And Alderman ——— for a beau—beau!  
And Alderman ——— for a beau!”

<sup>2</sup> After reading this gorgeous piece it is amusing to recall the following words, “the detestable as well as debateable land of pseudo-poetic rhapsody in hermaphroditic prose, after the least admirable manner of such writers as

Now here again, of course, there will be "murmurs and movements among the audience" Φίλοι ἄνδρες—persons not only dear, but good and wise, for some of whom one has unfeigned and unconventional respect—will say, "Oh! but this ought to have been put into poetry, it has no business in prose, and in fact is half over the fence already." This I most humbly and politely, but also most firmly and irrevocably, deny. In the first place, fully as I believe in the doctrine that the poet *is* to number "the streaks of the tulip," yet I admit that he is not to number them too much—that he is to generalise and *disrealise*, to adjust and omit, as the rules of his art may require. Here the artist wanted to put, and was right in putting, everything *that was there*<sup>1</sup>—a wealth of detail which would have been out of place in verse. In the second place, he has most triumphantly vindicated the position of highly toned and highly coloured prose, by making its tones and its colours, its diction and its ordonnance and its rhythm, distinctly *non-poetic*. A novice or a bungler would almost certainly have written "*have I seen*," and so have given a handle to objectors to cry "Poetic inversion!" But Athene, who, perhaps out of *odium theologicum*, had not touched Jeremy Taylor's hand or ear, touched Mr Swinburne's, and it went right. At two or three other points (I leave to the reader what should be the pleasure of finding them) blank verse lay ahead, and would almost certainly have been run into, not merely by novices or bunglers, but by many great ones. Mr Swinburne, beckoned by his Oceanides, steers clear of it, keeping throughout to the deep waters of pure prose rhythm

"From her stainless | and Olympian | summit, | of divine, |  
indifferent | light" is one of the things that one carries

De Quincey" (*Miscellanies*, pp 222, 223) Now, as I have ventured to demonstrate, De Quincey's prose is *not* "hermaphroditic"—its charms may be the charms of Felise or Faustine, they are not those of Fragoletta. But De Quincey, we know, had blasphemed some of Mr Swinburne's gods, and was a Tory, and perhaps, in Swift's too famous words, "deserved the gallows for something else, and so he shall swing."

<sup>1</sup> Those who know their Hazlitt will recognise the quotation

about in memory like the great verse-jewels of the older harmony—a beryl with a song in it that has nothing harmful, but a joy, and a marvel, and a blessing for ever <sup>1</sup>

In touching on the prose of William Morris, it is hardly possible to avoid a small excursus of controversy, such as I have elsewhere for the most part eschewed. Critics of worship have pronounced his method “Wardour Street”, and in Wardour Street, or out of it, there can, it seems, come no good thing. Well! that was pretty much Ben Jonson’s objection to Spenser, and I do not think the best judgment of posterity has endorsed it. For my part, I have no more antecedent objection to thing or person because the street from which it comes is named “Wardour” than I have preference for it because that street is named “Regent” or “Rivoli”. All I want to know is whether it is beautiful and delightful. For me, I find beauty and delight in Morris’s following of Mandeville and Malory and some saga-men, not only now and then, not only not seldom, but very nearly always. It is, of course, like all falsettos, liable to a breakdown, and this sometimes, though not very often, occurs. At other times it seems to me extremely agreeable, and very nearly your only style for the matter. If anybody does not want the matter, well and good, let him leave it alone. I want the matter, and I like the style.

One remarkable point about it, as it concerns our department, is that, though written by a poet who was a quite exceptional master of metre, there is less that is decidedly metrical about it—much less—than there is in

<sup>1</sup> We may note here, too, an admirable example “in eadem materia” of the difference in the rhythms. Omit “and”

“ From her stain|less Olym|pian sum|mit  
Of divine, | indif|ferent light ”

is pure verse, and the last line requires no omission to make it so. *But the foot distribution is quite different*, and no one with an ear would read it so in prose. Of course, the singular persons who ask plaintively, “How a difference in naming the feet can alter the rhythm?” may see no alteration here. But to me a spondee or iamb followed and preceded by an anapaest, and an anapaest and a pæon followed by a monosyllable, produce rhythms as different as a hawk from a hand saw.

De Quincey or in Pater, both of whom deliberately endeavoured to put non-metre on a level with metre, not (as their heartiest admirer may admit) without a certain reason in the fact that the gods had apparently not made them poetical. But this absence is a proof that the medium "comes," as the gardeners say, "true"—that it is a real *mimesis* of its original, and not a mere stealing, copying, or "faking" of an imitation of another kind. If the reader will turn back to Malory himself, or even to the account of him here, he will see how that miraculous "compiler" took solid verses from his predecessors, and welded or melted them into perfect prose rhythm. Morris borrows less, but he observes an equally perfect prose form. It is part also of the "truth" of the revival that there are few distinctly purple passages: those who know their Malory are, of course, well aware that the purplest of the *Morte*—the dirge on Lancelot—is at least possibly not part of the original, but added when taste became more rhetorical. The rhythm is simply narrative or conversational, with the due tone and colour of romance thrown in. It is even not particularly easy to select passages short enough for our custom, and yet contributing the full merit of the medium. The following, from *The Well at the World's End*<sup>1</sup> (the longest, and perhaps on the whole the best, of all the series) may do for one.

Again he spoke, and his voice was weaker yet. "Kneel down by me, or I may not tell thee what I would, my voice dieth before me." / Then Ralph knelt down by him, for he began to have a deeming of what he was, and he put his face close to the dying man's, and said to him, "I am here, what wouldst thou?" / And the wild man very feebly, "I did not much for thee, time was, how might I when I loved her so sorely? But I did a little. Believe it, and do so much for me that I may lie by her side when I am dead, who never lay by her living. For into the cave I durst go never." / Then Ralph knew him, that he was the tall champion whom he had met first at the churchyard gate of Netherton, so he said, "I know

<sup>1</sup> I have sometimes wondered whether he took the very striking description of the well itself from that of the Well of St. Senanus on the wild Clare coast in *Jack Hinton*. The suggestion may raise a laugh, but Morris, who knew good things when he saw them, may have found them in Charles Lever as well as in Charlotte Yonge.

thee now, and I will promise to do thy will therein I am sorry that I have slain thee, forgive it me" / A mocking smile came into the dying man's eyes, and he said, whispering, "Richard it was, not thou" The smile spread over his face, he strove to turn more towards Ralph, and said in very faint whisper, "The last time" / No more he said, but gave up the ghost presently<sup>1</sup>

If that is "Wardour Street," and Wardour Street can give us such rhythms as that, I would it were as long as the American Avenues that can count the house numbers by two or three thousand—nay, as long as the road from this world to the next

About Mr George Meredith, who has divided with Mr Swinburne and Mr Pater the tutorship of most elaborate prose-writers for the last thirty or forty years, it is always difficult, for a person whom the gods have been kind or unkind enough to make critical, to write For as such a person cannot write in a rage, and as it is equally impossible for him to write, about this subject, in a rapture, he runs the chance of almost Swinburnian excommunications from some of the rapturous, and of polite commiseration from others To say that Mr Meredith *could* not be rhythmical, and admirably so, in prose as in verse, would be absurd To say that in prose—where he has not, to my remembrance, let us explicitly into the secret, as he has in verse—he generally *would* not, is simply the truth That there may be a rhythm of the topsy-turvy—a kind of quaternion-rhythm—I do not deny, but in the existing conditions and dimensions of the English-literary universe it is difficult to discover, here, anything even corresponding to the symmetry with which, in the good old days, little boys used to turn actual corporeal "cart-wheels" on Holborn Hill When a writer is perpetually endeavouring

<sup>1</sup> I have taken the liberty, while indicating by the slant down stroke / the author's short paragraphs, to close them up, in order to show that nothing like the stave division of *Ossian* or the *Leaves of Grass* is necessary to bring out the rhythm It is quite pure and continuous prose, though exquisitely, however quietly, musical As a Morrisian of nearly the oldest guard, I may perhaps be allowed to express pleasure at seeing how, in various quarters, the prejudice against this delightful poet as a mere *improvisatore*, pleasant enough but rather trivial, is lifting and flying And though the prose has not yet shared this justice, I think it will come

to make his reader see stars by impinging him on an abutment of blank wall, rhythm is needless and not to be expected "The irony of Providence sent him by a cook's shop, where the mingled steam of meats and puddings rushed out upon the wayfarer like ambushed bandits, and seized him and dragged him in, or sent him qualmish and humbled on his way" The actual cadence here is not ill, but you have hardly time to appreciate it, while you are wondering whether ambushed bandits rushing out would make you "qualmish and humbled," whether a "qualmish" passer-by would feel "humbled," even putting the bandits out of the question, and whether one humbled by hunger and poverty would not rather feel "pangs" than "qualms"

The *rhythmical* drawback to this fantastic style—which is occasionally, no doubt, attractive enough in itself—is that it is perpetually opposing snags and ledges to the clear current of the composition Sometimes these utterly defy all harmony They are, of course (let me observe it to obviate the withering of my withers by the remark of a pious Meredithian that "there are some, perhaps many, who lack the intelligence and the sensibility that can alone admit them within the charmed circle of appreciative readers"), perfectly deliberate But here is one drawn from a large context of similar utterances, the opening chapter of *Diana of the Crossways*

No blame whatever, one would say, if he had been less copious or not so subservient in recording the lady's utterances, for though the wit of a woman may be terse, quite spontaneous, as this lady's assuredly was, here and there she is apt to spin it out of a museful mind at her toilette or by the lonely fire, and sometimes it is imitative, admirers should beware of holding it up to the withering glare of print, she herself, quoting an obscure maxim monger, says of these lapidary sentences, that they have merely the value of chalk eggs which lure the thinker to sit, and tempt the vacuous to train for the like, one might add, besides flattering the world to imagine itself richer than it is in eggs that are golden<sup>1</sup>

Now I can quite understand a competent judge saying

<sup>1</sup> I wonder how many of the charmed *etcetera* have perceived the under current of *leprochaun* like satire in these words



that this way of writing is in its way precious to the mind, but I can hardly imagine any granting to it the favour and the affection of the ear. Of course Mr Meredith was perfectly well able (and now and then, specially in the *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, condescended to display the ability) to lay eggs all golden in sound as well as in sense. But, then, at others, he condescended, in another sense, to write things worse than the passages quoted—things that not I or Cluvenus at our worst could outgo in positive badness of style and sound.

The worthy creature's anxiety was of the pattern of cavaliers escorting dames—an exaggeration of honest zeal, or present example of clownish goodness it might seem, until entering the larch and firwood among the beaten heights, there was a rocking and straining of the shallow-rooted trees in a tremendous gust, that quite pardoned him for curving his arm in a hoop about her, and holding a shoulder in front.

Here, as so often, one thinks of his old housemate Mr Swinburne's happy retorsion of Ben's famous bravado

By God, 'tis good, and if you like't you may

*By God, 'tis bad, and worse than tongue can say*

And the fact is, that here, as of Ben, and as perhaps is necessary, both are true.

It has been said that Mr Meredith and Mr Pater, sometimes separately, sometimes together, have been the real patterns of the various attempts made, during the last thirty or forty years, to "raise" (I think that is what they call it) the poor English language "to a higher power." Mr Swinburne, immensely followed at first in verse, was also imitated to some extent in prose. But the *mimesis* mocked the endeavours in too open a fashion, and the sublime effort of an American poet in the one harmony—

Where the cocoa and cactus are neighbours,

Where the fig and the fir-tree are one—

was, rather always than occasionally, paralleled in the other. Meredith and Pater have kept the field as objects of imitation, and the results have been sometimes

very terrible, often very amusing. I once began a museum of awful examples, but abandoned it as rather unfair—in fact, as I have ventured to argue elsewhere, I think taking living authors for subjects, unless in the official way of business, and at their own quasi-invitation as a reviewer, is doubtful literary “cricket,” though it can plead Mr Arnold as a great practitioner. But I do “remember, forget, and remember” (for I did my deliberate and fairly successful utmost to bury name, title, and place of publication in oblivion) a magazine article not of the last century, and not, I think, far back in the last decade, which, though obviously sincere, was the most triumphant and pyramidal composition of cadenced nonsense and meaningless Marivaudage-Meredithese, that Aristophanes or Lucian in Greek, Jonathan Swift or Henry Duff Traill in English, could ever have compassed as a parody-caricature.

It would be difficult, either for my personal satisfaction, or for the suitableness of things, to leave out Mr Stevenson, but to exhibit that “sedulous apéry” of his, which he so frankly confessed, would require far more space than can be spared. It is a commonplace now that only at the end of his too short life did he acquire—that he was even then but on the point of acquiring—a style perfectly natural, free, and his own. One piece and one only—a well-known and early one, but very characteristic—shall be given, because in it, especially from the “apish” side, there are to be seen mingled two of the most opposite influences that can possibly be imagined at first sight, the influences of Ruskin and of Macaulay. At the last name some may utter shouts of surprise, contempt, or horror, but I have little doubt of the fact, and few younger or even middle-aged critics of the present day know how all-pervading, even when and where it was not exactly relished, was the influence of the *History* and the *Essays* up to a period quite late enough for Stevenson to have felt it. However, it shall speak for itself, and perhaps may well close this chapter, with a short postscript of “excuses for absence.” Nor need we, I think, deal with his

interesting discussions of style, for they are rather general, and would require some controversy which I wish to keep out of this book

At what inaudible summons, at what gentle touch of Nature, are all these sleepers thus recalled in the same hour to life? Do the stars rain down an influence, or do we share some thrill of mother earth below our resting bodies? Even shepherds and old country-folk, who are the deepest read in these arcana, have not a guess as to the means or purpose of this nightly resurrection. Towards two in the morning they declare the thing takes place, and neither know nor inquire further. And at least it is a pleasant incident. We are disturbed in our slumber, only like the luxurious Montaigne, "that we may the better and more sensibly relish it." We have a moment to look up on the stars. And there is a special pleasure for some minds in the reflection that we share the impulse with all outdoor creatures in our neighbourhood, that we have escaped out of the Bastille of civilisation, and are become, for the time being, a mere kindly animal and a sheep of Nature's flock.

When that hour came to me among the pines, I wakened thirsty. My tin was standing by me half full of water. I emptied it at a draught, and feeling broad awake after this internal cold aspersion, sat upright to make a cigarette. The stars were clear, coloured, jewel-like, but not frosty. A faint silvery vapour stood for the Milky Way. All around me the black fir-points stood upright and stock still. By the whiteness of the pack saddle, I could see Modestine walking round and round at the length of her tether, I could hear her steadily munching at the sward, but there was not another sound, save the indescribable quiet talk of the runnel over the stones. I lay lazily smoking and studying the colour of the sky, as we call the void of space, from where it showed a reddish gray behind the pines to where it showed a glossy blue black between the stars. As if to be more like a pedlar, I wear a silver ring. This I could see faintly shining as I raised or lowered the cigarette, and at each whiff the inside of my hand was illuminated and became for a second the highest light in the landscape.

I had at one time thought of extending my examples from this chapter of prose. I had intended to cite and analyse the mastery over the "collect" euphony\*—marvellously difficult—of the English Prayer-Book, shown by Christina Rossetti, that consummate mistress of rhythm in verse, the living-dream fancies of the author of *Phantastes* and *The Portent*, the admirably sinewy prose of Huxley, the quaintness and "race," often blended with positive beauty, of Mr. Blackmore, the vigorous

antithesis and seldom-overdone epigram of my friend the late Mr Henley, and the almost uncanny ease and grace of that wonderful unfinished *History of England* which (I do not know what have been its later fortunes) its publisher told me at the time "nobody would buy or read," and which came, in changed harmony as under a changed author's name, from the same pen that wrote *Ionica*. But yet, once more, this is not a Book of Beauties, and it ought not to be made too long a book, and we must say something general before we close, and perhaps add an Appendix or two after the main curtain has dropped. I hope it will not have been a bad concert, but probably nobody will be sorry that it should be done.

## CONCLUSION

WHETHER at, or towards, the conclusion of the present attempt the well-meaning adventurer is, to any considerable extent, in the traditional position of "master" to himself as he was when he began it, I shall not pretend to say. That he is at least more conscious than ever of the audacity of the attempt itself, I can heartily asseverate. Yet the increased consciousness need not, I trust, be incompatible with a hope, if not a belief, that something at least has been attempted, even that an appreciable, if inadequate, something has been done. If I have not climbed the mountain, I think I may perhaps be allowed to have provided a convenient shop at its foot, where maps, and rope, and axes, and alpenstocks, and perhaps some provisions and stimulants for the journey, can be obtained a little more conveniently than they could be obtained before. And it may here be possible, not merely to add to the information already given by summarising it, but to deduce, or rather infer, some more general considerations than have hitherto, save now and then in a glance, been ventured upon.

As in reference to Prosody, so in reference to Prose Rhythm, I disclaim, detest, abominate, and in every other English and classical form renounce, the attempt to show how a prose-harmonist should develop his harmony. But I hope that I may perhaps have shown, and may now show farther, how the harmonists of the past have developed theirs. And I have tried to do this by using continuously that principle of arrangement by feet which, though with proper distinctions for the language, forces

itself upon Englishmen, to my thinking, quite as inevitably as, according to Quintilian in the passage which I have used as motto, it forced itself upon Romans

To a certain extent, of course, the old demurrer, "Does English admit of feet *at all*?" remains, but I shall take the liberty to neglect it, merely referring to what I have said already in the *History of Prosody*. There are, no doubt, some differences in the two cases, but they are differences mainly, if not wholly, of "administration". In verse a man may object to the foot system, but he always has to make some substitute for it<sup>1</sup>—some "accent-," or "stress-," or "bar-," or "section-" plan of distribution—to account for the manifestly organic character of his subject. With prose, for obvious reasons, it is different. Only an abject fool, or a bizarre and almost impossible genius,<sup>2</sup> thinks that he may write verse *comme bon lui semble*. But as everybody "speaks prose without knowing it," so, without being quite a fool or at all a genius, he may hold that there is nothing much to know *about* it—that its exercises are incapable of being reduced to rule, and that when such demands as mere grammar or perspicuity makes are complied with, there is no more to be said.

Still, when any one of tolerable wits, and possessed of ears in body and mind, condescends really to consider the subject, he can hardly refuse to reconsider, or at least rearrange, his ideas on it. It is impossible that any such person shall continue to see no difference between Sir Thomas Browne and Conyers Middleton, between the Authorised Version and the Revised, between Locke and Berkeley, between Hooker or Donne and any twentieth-century tub-thumper. And if he thinks a little longer

<sup>1</sup> At the very moment when I was revising this proof, I happened to receive a letter in which there occurred the words, "I do not scan by feet, but by tune and time." No "retort" was necessary, for the remark (it had nothing to do with this book, of the existence of which the writer was ignorant) was well wishing and quite uncontroversial. But "reply" was easy. "As soon as you have done this, *feet* of one kind or another will have appeared, inevitably, if without your knowing it."

<sup>2</sup> Even Blake, who answers to this latter description as well as another, did not think anything of the kind, and tells us so.

still, he will see that much, if not all, the difference belongs, as far as expression, not thought, is concerned, to this question of rhythm. Now rhythm requires, as a condition of its existence, the difference which I designate by the terms "long" and "short," and the values which I so term are, by inexorable and inevitable mathematical laws, grouped into the batches which I call "feet." And this arrangement of groups is applicable, and has been here applied, to the whole course of English prose.

The actual summary of the past application may be given briefly, but should not, I think, be omitted here, for the simple reason that I do not know where else it is attainable. We saw that in the oldest—the technical "Old" or "Anglo-Saxon"—stage, the tendency to regard the rhythm of prose and that of verse as identical was perhaps a little deceptive, but that both were actually, to a very large extent, trochaic, and that, in the more ambitious exercises of prose, the writers seemed to have little to rely upon, except the same instruments of accent and alliteration which they would have used in verse. But we saw, also, that both poetic rhythm and poetic word-choice, especially the latter, could be discarded, and that a simple narrative style, not more cadenced than conversation, could be and was produced.

In Middle English we saw that the necessary processes of remoulding the language from an inflected, synthetic, purely Teutonic dialect into an uninflected and analytic tongue of mixed Teutonic and Romance, assisted by the absence of any person of distinct genius in literature for two or three centuries, delayed the formation of a definite rhythm, but that when this process of formation began to draw to an end in the earlier fourteenth century, and when, a little later, the absence of genius began to be supplied, an almost entirely new range of rhythms, except in the simplest narrative and conversation, began likewise to be evolved. The disuse of inflection mitigated the trochaic tyranny automatically, the provision, by the Romance admixture, of differently balanced and, on the whole, more polysyllabic vocabulary, varied the new rhythm-

bases We saw how, at last, people began consciously to try writing "fairly", how devices for it were adopted, and how, at the Renaissance, the critical literature of the older Rhetoric, in which prose rhythm, and discussion of it, held a large place, began to exert influence

Finally—finally, that is to say, as far as this stage of it is concerned—we saw how the two great kinds of rhythmical arrangement, the balanced rhetorical antiphony on the one hand, and the long swelling complex symphony on the other, were almost pitted against each other by Lyly and Hooker. In the first of these writers we have, beyond all possibility of question, a deliberate attempt to *make* rhythm as well as other constituents of style, in the second, with however much or however little deliberation, we have, equally beyond question, the actual attainment of a style pre-eminently finished in rhythm. There is, indeed, a kind of cross-antithesis between these two remarkable writers—Hooker being plain and quiet in respect of diction, grammatical arrangement, rhetorical trick and ornament, to such a pitch that, as we observed, some well-meaning persons have held that he approaches the poor and the beggarly, while Lyly, going to the ends of the earth for his vocabulary, and twisting his style into all sorts of figures, so contents himself with the easiest and most rudimentary kind of rhythm that other equally well-meaning persons have scouted the classing of him as "ornate"

In the following century, however, and when plain and ornate styles are now distinctly ranged against each other, this reversal of characters ceases—except in Bacon himself, who has more of sixteenth than of seventeenth character, and is "mixed" in this as in the other qualities of style. The plainer writers do, as a rule, keep to plain antithetic or antiphonic rhythm, the ornatier do, as a rule, adapt to their apples of gold the picture-frame of silver, and marry the magnificence of their language and imagery to symphonic and polyphonic harmony.

In the conflict, or at least the competition, of the two styles we saw how, for long, remnants of the old musical



or rhetorical clangour clung even to plain styles like that of Hobbes, and to half-French polished styles like that of Temple, while it attained to the fullest possible symphony and polyphony in Browne and Taylor and Milton. But this music is killed by demands of business, by the intrusion of grammar-books, and (to speak frankly) by the ceasing, for a time, of the birth of musicians. The "naked, natural way of writing" (as it seemed to itself) which succeeded, sinks almost all rhythm but that of parallel arrangement of more or less varying lengths, where the ends only (and sometimes not even the ends) had much of any rhythmical intention. But Dryden shows how, by the idiosyncrasy and "fingering" of genius rather than by any discoverable or analysable tricks of composition, there could be got out of, or superimposed upon, the nature and the nakedness, a subtle but astonishing development of art and vesture. And the last two or three sentences really supply an abbreviation of the history of prose rhythm, as of prose style generally, from 1660 to 1800, or a little later. The tendency is always downwards—not always, though sometimes, to a more or less vulgar, and often jerky conversation, as in L'Estrange, and Collier, and Bentley, and the base Mandeville—but always to the flatness and meanness of the Photian observation<sup>1</sup>—to the alignment of rhythmically soundless or monotonous clauses with, at the best, a certain parallelism to give them a kind of sound, if not of resonance. And from time to time individual writers attempt dead-lifts—Addison with the undulations and end-crispings of the milder, Swift with the clenching or crushing mould of the stronger, irony, Berkeley by perfecting, as nobody but Plato and Malebranche had done before him, the order natural to Logic and the more refined Rhetoric, Bolingbroke, by courting a showier and more "tricked and frounced" sister of the rhetorical family. But always style drops down again, to a nakedness which is not in the least ashamed, and a something else which is not so much the presence of nature as the absence of art.

<sup>1</sup> *V supra*, p. 229.

And then we come to the three Titans who set themselves—it is difficult not to think in all cases deliberately—to the business of raising it for good, and who in a certain sense succeed, their efforts in each case being very mainly, if not in by far the greatest part, rhythmical. There is Johnson who, without in his most characteristic style—in the regular “Johnsonese”—going much beyond balance and antithesis for instruments, varies the form and application of these instruments almost *prodigialiter*, arranges his contrasts and correspondences in intricate mosaics of triple or quadruple parallel group-effects, compels attention to the *whole* composition of these mosaics (the neglect of which had been the great fault of the plain style hitherto) by deliberately pitting adjective against adjective, substantive against substantive, verb against verb, and swings the whole, in ponderous but not clumsy libration, against the reader’s ear and mind at once<sup>1</sup>. Burke takes the Bolingbrokean bladders, and fills them, as smugglers of old are said to have done, not with wind, but with spirit (with the wind of the spirit if anybody likes), and once more compels, by his union of imagery with sentiment and argument, the same *continuous* attention to the whole flow of his phrase. While later Gibbon, refusing or deserting *mere* balance, extends and undulates it into something like the old sweep of Hooker, and, in a manner hardly before practised since the middle of the seventeenth century, connects the rhythm of his sentences with that of his paragraphs.

And so there comes about—less by the efforts or the determination of any single one of these, than as a result of two, even of all of them, and of others back to Addison and Dryden—what has been called the “standard style” in rhythm as in other things—a style, not aiming, except in its deliberate “flights,” and not aiming very full or high even then, at polyphonic effect in sentence, and symphonic arrangement of sentences—confining itself as a rule to

<sup>1</sup> There is nothing that symbolises the true Johnsonian manner better to my mind than the swing of the ram, with its stages and suspensions and shielded engineers working it, in the old classical *Companion* picture.

decently adjusted balance—but never, unless it is below itself, inharmonious, troubled about selection of seemly and well-warranted language, steering very carefully clear of anything in the least suggesting poetry, but steering clear, more carefully still, of cacophony, and vulgarity, and flatness. This is the style which, for more than a hundred years, has been affected by our best expositors and arguers, which, till Macaulay and Carlyle in their different ways deserted it, was supposed to be especially incumbent on historians, which has sometimes been called academic, which is still aimed at by those who do not aim at, or succumb to, special peculiarities, and which is still successfully written by some persons, whose names will very readily occur, without a mention which might appear sycophantic to themselves and invidious to others.

The very full account which has been given, in the last two chapters, of attempts during the last hundred years to adapt this style to special purposes, and the slight, but perhaps sufficient, notice of its degradations, may excuse us from anything more than a paragraph upon both here. It is sufficient to leave the degradations alone, and to say of the embellishments that they have, in all cases, represented attempts to imbue and supersaturate prose with rhythm, to reintroduce, and if possible extend, the endeavours of the seventeenth century at symphony and polyphony. But, where they have been strictly legitimate, they have always kept in mind that this hyperdose of *rhythm* should stop rigidly short of continuous, complete, and definite *metre*. There may have been more differences, in theory and in practice, on the point whether, as the strictest theorists of old held, even a formed fragment of *metre* is forbidden in prose, or whether, as the more liberal of those teachers allowed, such fragments are quite legitimate, and almost unavoidable, the only thing absolutely prohibited being continuous, undisguised, obtrusive, metrical *run*. Of the work of the explorers—I think they almost deserve the title of *conquistadores* of this almost new, prose-world—examples have been given and analysed, from the long

unknown experiments of Coleridge, who was born all but a century and a half ago, to the achievements of Mr Swinburne and Mr Meredith, who died but the other day

There remains only the duty—not to be shirked but to be undertaken with anything but a light heart—of seeing whether we can generalise from this more than millennium of particulars, whether we can not merely, as perhaps has been done to some extent, arrange a panorama of what has happened, but can to any degree systematise the happenings<sup>1</sup>

One great principle we can perhaps lay down, as established beyond possibility of contradiction. It is not new—there is no doubt that the proper correction of the famous saying of Pococurante Junior is “There is nothing true except what is not new and this matters very much” But the principle has not been exactly proclaimed from the house-tops, and whether proclaimed or not, it has been very little attended to, and never, to my knowledge, worked out at all till the present occasion. *As the essence of verse-metre is its identity (at least in equivalence) and recurrence, so the essence of prose-rhythm lies in variety and divergence* As the identity of recurrence in verse is, in the best examples, tempered by an equivalence which must be pretty exact, so the variety in prose-rhythm is tempered, in the same sentence and in different sentences, by a second principle of association which will be further expounded shortly As you certainly will not produce the best verse by attempting, like the eighteenth-century people, to make identity and recurrence absolute, so you certainly will not secure the best prose by simply turning out feet anyhow, only taking care that no two or three following shall be the same. We have occasionally noted—and have left the fact, indicated by scansion, to the apprehension of the intelligent reader in a much larger number of cases—that many of the most attractive rhythm-groups in prose appear to be

<sup>1</sup> I hope to give in Appendix III a tabular synopsis of the chief “findings” of this kind—insisting, there as here, on their strictly *provisional* character

founded on a sort of foot-extension, and then foot-retraction, of feet related to each other in composition or cadence—monosyllable, iamb, amphibrach, third pæon, dochmiac—dochmiac, pæon, amphibrach, trochee, with a final monosyllable, or not, according to a provision which corresponds to catalexis in verse. But we should probably interpose some remarks on the feet themselves, a table of which may be found elsewhere<sup>1</sup>

The dochmiac, or five-syllable foot, admitting a large variety of changes, but seldom found with more than two long syllables in it,<sup>2</sup> and often with one, I have unhesitatingly admitted to a place in prose. In fact I have been liberal (or licentious) enough to suggest that, in certain kinds of prose, where the rhythm of the internal parts of the clause is imperfectly marked, there might be batches of even six syllables, where it would be difficult to select more than one long enough to serve as the nucleus or back-bone of a foot. But these instances occur very rarely, if at all, in the highest kind of "numerous" art, and there is always in them a sort of elision, synalcepha, or slur<sup>3</sup>. But of the five-syllable foot in prose I have as little doubt as I have room for it in verse. In some cases, no doubt—in many perhaps—it may be split up into a pæon and a monosyllabic foot, or into two syllables and three. But, in a proportion which is not perhaps a minority, the *total* rhythm, the legitimate rhetorical current of the cadence, is not improved by this. The dochmiac, in fact, like the pæon, but even more so, is one of the great distinguishers of English prose- from English verse-rhythm, and one of the strongest arguments against our modern stress-prosodists who make four- or five- or six-syllable "bars" in verse, is that these tend (as indeed

<sup>1</sup> P. xvi

<sup>2</sup> Because so much ballast in its hold would break it up. I have said elsewhere that I do not quite know how the Greeks pronounced it in verse (it is not absolutely certain that it was anything but a "book made" foot with them), and *we* most assuredly could not get it in there. But it is easy enough to take it in the more sesquipedalian stride of prose, and I think it a distinct convenience here.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed Thelwall's *appoggiatura* or "grace" syllable, an unnecessary crime in verse, is not unthinkable, or wholly shocking, in prose.

they do in other ways also) to obliterate the "great divide" between the two harmonies

Advancing a little further, we find that the quadrisyllabic feet, or some of them, play an exceedingly important part in English prose. This importance, as to the pæon had, as we saw, been noticed by Aristotle in Greek, and in English also I should hardly object to a system which made it *the* "foot of all work" in prose. Many of my own scansiones admit quite cheerfully of "coupling up" monosyllabic feet, or a trisyllabic and a monosyllable, or two dissyllables, into pæons generally, epitrites seldom but sometimes, and the rest of the quadrisyllabic feet<sup>1</sup> more or less frequently. But for the more ornate and numerous prose, I may here repeat one of those general observations which I have already often made in the text and notes, to wit that the *third* pæon, especially when, by the large commonness of English, the final syllable manufactures something like an Ionic *a minore*, is found, and found in a great, perhaps a predominant, portion of those passages which aim at special harmonic effect.

In trisyllables it has been suggested that the amphibrach holds first place, and I should not be averse to seeing a fated and metaphysical connection with the prominence of the pæon and the dochmiac,<sup>2</sup> in the very

<sup>1</sup> Except the dispondees. Four long syllables would overweight a single foot in English prose, as three (which are not too much here) do in English verse. And, if they were found together, the inseparable emphasis would be better attained by a molossus and a monosyllable, two separated spondaes, or (as is optionally possible to the number of *five* at the beginning of Sir Thomas Browne's diploma piece) monosyllables paused apart.

<sup>2</sup> The "procession" of the relation of some of these may be pardonably extra illustrated in symbols here

∪ - ∪ Amphibrach  
 ∪ ∪ - ∪ Third pæon  
 ∪ ∪ ∪ - ∪ Dochmiac

The reader will see at once that many of these procession groups may be similarly constructed, as that of long syllable, iamb, anapest {  $\begin{smallmatrix} - & - & - \\ \cup & \cup & \cup \end{smallmatrix}$  }, or dactyl, trochee, long syllable {  $\begin{smallmatrix} - & \cup & \cup \\ - & \cup & \cup \end{smallmatrix}$  }, with endless others. In fact, if Guest's

Aldrichian suggestion of a formal arrangement *a priori* of all possible "sections" for verse, to be tried on their merits, was rather horrid and slightly futile, a similar arrangement of these and other groups, to be actually experimented on in prose, is not a merely Bedlamite notion.

fact that it is a foot, as I have also said, certainly to be dispensed with in verse, and with great uncertainty to be admitted anywhere, or in most places, there. But it is not Turkishly-minded towards its brethren, on the contrary, it seems rather to like the assembling of them together, round the throne where it sits as *primus inter pares*. Every form of trisyllabic is, I believe, to be found with us, the tribrach being, perhaps the rarest, though so frequent in verse, because it has rather little substance for prose, and is apt to take unto itself a syllable or dissyllable of some strength, and become a pæon or dochmiac. So too its opposite, the molossus, is not very common, though (as *not* in verse) perfectly possible, and sometimes extremely effective. The others, dactyl and anapæst, cretic and bacchic and anti-bacchic, are scattered everywhere. In their variety, and in their want of exact (with a presence of floating) equivalence, they lend themselves to the general system of our prose most happily.

Of the dissyllabics, the pyrrhic may seem to be even more rare than in verse, and for the same reason ("only more so") which partially excluded the tribrach—its want of substance and its extreme tendency (like little sugar bubbles in a cup of tea) to coalesce with or be sucked into its greater neighbours. A purist who objected to the six-syllable "sections" of the peculiar rhythm referred to above might get rid of them, perhaps most easily, by allowing pyrrhics. But, as has been remarked before, the rhythmical tension of these passages is so low, or their speed so high, that it hardly allows foot-marking of a very definite kind. The others—spondee, trochee, iamb—are, of course, ubiquitous. The singular deafness which could deny, or the more singular asceticism which would renounce, the spondee in English verse, will be more hard put to it still in prose, and can pretend to effect its purpose only at the cost of even more disastrous results. As for the trochee, we have seen that it was once the master of rhythm in prose as in verse, and it has never, to the present day, wholly lost its power, which is specially great at the close of a sentence or rhythm-

group<sup>1</sup> For the iamb, it is great in the same place, and in the interior or beginning is as great or greater But it is rather as a temperer or admixture—as what the cooks call a *liaison*—that it is most important, and, when it is relied upon by itself, the dangerous Delilah of blank verse is always at hand to trim the prose Samson's locks

Of the existence of the monosyllabic foot in English prose I am as great a champion as I am of it in English verse, and I think it is infinitely more prevalent As allowed above, it may sometimes be compounded with trisyllabics into a pæon, and with pæons or other fours into a dochmiac But in a very large number of cases, and especially at the end, this would make a far feebler and less effective cadence than the "bearing up" of it into a substantive foot, which becomes valuable, and almost invaluable, as a strongly-marked pivot or stepping-stone in the turn or progress of the rhythm And after all, we have so many monosyllables in the English language that the least we can do for them is to give them full status in this fashion

Thus we have, for basis of calculation and partition in prose rhythm, a body of feet, from one syllable to five at least, admitting of arrangement to the number in all of something like threescore individual combinations, and providing, when combined with each other in the various groups which we call clauses, sentences, and paragraphs, a possibility of variety which is rather mathematically than rhetorically infinite

All this is, so far, a pretty solid road to walk upon But, at this point, are we not rather "on the brink of Eternity," like the Major and the footman and Mr. Titmarsh in Thackeray's frontispiece? Is it possible to support, extend, and multiply those specimen-hints as to combination of feet which were given above? It may be, but I have repeatedly warned the reader not to expect too much from the attempt

<sup>1</sup> For Mason's objection, based on mistaken *data* of the ancients, see Appendix II



In the first place, I must deprive myself of a weapon, or instrument, or whatever it may prefer to be called, of which the ancients availed themselves largely, and which almost my chief predecessor, John Mason,<sup>1</sup> borrowed from them without hesitation. I am totally unable to allow in English, and I frankly admit inability to understand even in Greek and Latin, the division of feet into sheep and goats—into “noble and generous” on the one side, “base and weak” on the other. I have indeed admitted a certain want of substance, for the purposes of English prose, in feet consisting entirely of short syllables, but this is a quite different thing from marking-off, as Mason does, not merely pyrrhic and tribrach, but trochee, dactyl, amphibrach, and anti- (Mason calls it by its other name, palim-) bacchic as “base,” while iamb, spondee, anapæst, cretic, bacchic, and molossus are made peers of the rhythmic realm.

Of course the advantage—or let us rather say the object, for it seems to me a most dubious and treacherous “advantage”—of this is obvious. When you have patented your “noble” numbers and branded your “base” ones, it is quite clear that the more you use the first, and avoid the second, the better will your combination be. If you must use the rabble, stuff them into the interior of your sentences, begin with something distinguished and (almost more carefully) end with the same. Back up a pawn with a peer whenever you can, and so forth. Certainly the apparent difficulty of the question is marvellously lessened, in fact it may seem almost to vanish bodily. But is there not, as far as English is concerned (for, unlike some modern “scholars,” I am not prepared to dictate to Greeks and Romans about their own pronunciation, grammar, and prosody), a rather big *other* question begged somewhere? Mason himself, a solid commonsense John Bull, finds a few difficulties—as how to do away with the Dionysian epithet *σεμνός* for the dactyl, or with Cicero’s remarkable statement that numerous prose *non semper numero fit*. I most certainly shall

<sup>1</sup> V Appendix II

not admit any "baseness" in the amphibrach, after having laboriously traced it, as a potent and effective ingredient in the finest English prose, for three whole centuries. As for that of the trochee, it is simply absurd. For age the trochee bears the bell in English from every other foot, for softness and solemnity alike, for clangour and for plangency, it has no superior in verse or prose, and, as a closing foot, it is perhaps present in an absolute majority of our finest prose harmonies. The dactyl, "kittle" to deal with in verse, and in fact better avoided, is often highly effective in prose, and though the antibacchic has perhaps less "character" than any of the others, and is indeed in English often indiscernible from the amphibrach, there is no "baseness" of any kind about it, and it is not even open, as the pyrrhic and tribrach are, to the charge of a certain want of "body."

The office of the Promoter is more gracious than that of the Devil's Advocate, and even if it were not, I have not the slightest intention of exchanging to the latter in reference to the so-called "generous" and "noble" feet. To me all feet are beautiful alike, on the mountains of verse and in the plains of prose, if they move themselves delicately or vigorously but aright. I shall only comment on the extreme arbitrariness of the preference of the bacchic over its counterpart, merely on the more genial assumption that a foot which ends with a long syllable is nobler than one which ends with a short. Perhaps my sense of this arbitrariness, in English, is deepened by my knowledge of the fact that, in English, and especially in English prose, so many last syllables of feet (as instanced above in the case of the third pæon) are common or indifferent, that there is a real difference between our language and the two great classical tongues in this respect. And I confess that in what is perhaps the most beautiful prose sentence ever written, the last of the Platonic *Apology*, I always, in the teeth of accent and quantity alike, feel inclined to lengthen the first syllable of *θεῶν* in order to get a nearer approach to trochaic ending. Which is, no doubt, sinful, but I am English,

and I hope it is permitted to me to hear as well as to speak Englishly<sup>1</sup>

We shall therefore take, or rather I have already taken throughout, the lesson of St Peter on the housetop, and scout the idea of any foot being common or unclean. For the placing of them there must be many searchings of heart and of mind. If I hope anything about this poor book, it is that, on the facts given and the problems stated, many such searchings, more profitable than my own in result, may be made by others. As to one point, which governs all, something may be said first. It may be objected by some careful scrutineers that, after disallowing Mr Stevenson's criticism as to foot-making by word-splitting, I have after all followed it, and have generally, in the latter part of the book at any rate, refrained from making feet end in the middle of a word. I have said something about this before, but should probably say a little here too. At the time when he made the criticism referred to I was a mere novice and experimenter in this matter. After twenty years of scattered and occasional, and after two of continuous and systematic practice, I have not altered my opinion that such division is perfectly legitimate in all cases, in some decidedly to be preferred, and in not a few perhaps necessary, but that, if anybody dislikes it, it can in the majority be avoided. One reason for the avoidance, which I think I may say positively was not present to Stevenson's mind, is that such avoidance produces a new and valuable distinction from verse-scansion, where the less foot-end and word-end coincide unquestionably the better.

I have said, in more than one place, that the few English dealers with this subject appear to me to have

<sup>1</sup> After all, Plato often uses τὸ θεῖον as equivalent to ο θεός. Perhaps the whole should, however familiar, be given, if only to consecrate the page with its beauty. Ἄλλα | γὰρ ἤδη | ὦρα | ἀπιέναι, | ἐμοὶ μὲν | ἀποθανομένῳ, | ὑμῖν δὲ | βιωσομένοις | ὀπότεροι | δὲ ἡμῶν | ἔρχονται | ἐπὶ ἀμεινον | πράγμα, | ἀδελφον | παντὶ | πλὴν εἰ | τῷ θεῷ. The text is Professor Burnet's, for myself I think I like πλὴν ἢ better. The scansion, while respecting Greek quantity, carefully pretends only to give the foot division most agreeable to the English ear above spoken of. I do not know, and I doubt whether anybody knows exactly, how Aristotle or Demetrius, Dionysius or Longinus, would have scanned it.

bestowed, again no doubt in following of their classical guides, disproportionate if not always exclusive attention in the *endings* of sentences, adding sometimes, on the same suggestion, a little in reference to the beginnings. And we have seen that the practice of the eighteenth century, to which they chiefly belonged, to some extent justified (though in a way rather damning by implication) this restricted attention. In fully developed prose-rhythm "a beginning, a middle, and an end" are to be demanded and respected as impartially as in an Aristotelian tragedy. But there *is* also a natural tendency *respicere finem*, and, in the architecture of the paragraph more particularly, these endings, as we have actually pointed out in many cases, bear a part of dominant importance. The most beautiful endings in English are trochaic or quasi-trochaic. But the abrupt iambic or quasi-iambic close has a strength and weight of its own, and an admixture of the two is undoubtedly desirable in the formation of a perfect paragraph—the universal word-of-command and password, "Variety," coming in here also.

The beginning is, in English, perhaps of somewhat less general importance than it seems to have been in the classical languages. By this I mean that it may lack a very particular or striking character without much general damage to the rhythmicity of what follows—not by any means that such character cannot, or cannot advantageously, be imparted to it. The magnificence of the passage from the Authorised Version of Isaiah, which has been so fully examined and compared, would be much less than it is if it were not so fully "set" and harbingered by the opening blasts of the iamb "Arise!" and the great monosyllable "Shine!" supported on either side by its attendant pauses, which give it almost the weight of a molossus. That of the crowning sentence of the *Urn Burial* would be impaired if the five blows on the coffin lid of "Now-since-these-dead-bones" did not usher in the more complicated symphony of the Dead March that follows. But these are instances of exceptional tension and intention, and as a rule it is our English habit not to begin too

flourishingly or startlingly For which reason I have paid less attention than most people have done to De Quincey's "Bishop of Beauvais" and to Pater's "The presence that thus arose beside the waters," insinuating as is the direct caress of its minor Ionic tone<sup>1</sup>

But, after all, the words of a not perhaps wholly illucid or unhumorous critic of life in general may occur to us, in regard to the particular point This philosopher used to say that, while it was the utterest commonplace of its kind to exhort to the improvement of youth, and a triviality scarcely less trodden to dwell on the value of making the most of age, hardly any one had taken as text the fact that the years of man's life from thirty to fifty—the only period in which pleasure in enjoying and power to enjoy walk hand in hand, when a man's means are often competent, and his calls on them not yet burdensome, when health of body and mind at once is fully reached and not yet dissipated—that such golden years are allowed to pass in a hurry and huddle of so-called occupations which, even when they are pleasant,—as most things, work and play, are then to the not decidedly unfortunate—do not allow themselves to be thoroughly savoured in the present, and laid up carefully in memory for the future But as this preacher had not the pen of Solomon, or that of Mr Browning, he did not write a new *Ecclesiastes* or *Rabbi ben Ezra*, he only said, "Take care of your *middles*"<sup>2</sup> And so I should say to a person ambitious to write good numerous prose in English It was the fault of the early stages that they did not take care either of beginning, or middle, or end, it was the virtue of the great sixteenth- or seventeenth-century writers that they took equal care of all, the fault of the succeeding school that these "middles" were specially neglected, and the glory of the nineteenth-century restorers, from Coleridge onwards, that they minded them

<sup>1</sup> Actually, of course, amphibrach, fourth pæon, and dochmiac But all these have touches in various ways of the undulating method of the minor Ionic, so often indicated as the most cajoling of all measures in English prose, and they give the sequence noted at p 452

<sup>2</sup> Dr Johnson said nearly the same thing, but with a different application

But how to take this care?—that is the question—the rose on this 10se-tree round which we constantly circle, but from which Danger as constantly warns us off. Some hints have been given, a few more may be tried. Many of them are simple enough applications, in different ways, of the universal Law of Variety. A very obvious one, which we have traced through centuries of time and scores of examples, is the juxtaposition, in gradual lengthening or shortening (the former is the more common), of clauses constructed on a more or less similar rhythm-scheme. This, as we saw, is very largely found in the more elaborate prose of the eighteenth century, and by no means absent from that of the nineteenth. The fault of it is almost as obvious as its merit. It is somewhat too mechanical, and, like all things mechanical without exception, is in danger of becoming monotonous. It also creates a sort of *stave* effect, which, as elsewhere observed, is especially to be avoided. But it has undoubted possibilities of charm, and perhaps even its obviousness is not quite so great as it may seem to one who has perceived the inwardness for himself, or has had it pointed out to him. At any rate, it does not seem to have been much dwelt on by ancient critics.

They, on the other hand, were fully aware of another device which, indeed, could escape no one, even if he were sitting down, in a vacuum of examples, to consider the subject for the absolutely first time—still less when he had any considerable number of such examples, before him. And this is the mixture of short and long sentences which is recommended to us in a great passage of Dionysius. This, though it also may be said to be in a manner mechanical, is not so to any extent that implies monotony, and, in greater or less degree, it has been universally resorted to. Its dangers, however, are real, though insidious, and to see them when the snares have been boldly stripped of their covering, we have only got to turn to Macaulay, to Kinglake, and to many more modern instances. Excessive contraction and letting out, the constant sending forth giant and dwarf in

company, communicates the smatch of cheap epigram—the sound and the scent of the halfpenny or farthing cracker. But it is, of course, purely the fault of the author if he lets himself indulge unduly in these futile and fatal fireworks, and still more his fault if he allows the indulgence to become a habit and an obsession. The actual mingling of short sentence and long is almost an indispensable resource for all styles, except those which, like Hooker's, and to some extent Gibbon's, rely upon long undulating sweeps, unbroken by any stop or flutter. Even Sir Thomas Browne indulges in it, and it is a question whether some of the most apparently quietist styles, such as Mr Pater's, do not disguise its actual presence by a different system of punctuation, so that what would have been sentences become clauses merely.

Some allusions in what has just been said may point us to a fresh path in the maze—the way in which rhythmical difference can be engineered by making the closes of clause, sentence, and paragraph abrupt, complete, or dying. While there is even a fourth way, of which, as hinted above, Mr Pater was almost the inventor, and which effects a sort of compromise between the abrupt and the dying by the employment of a gentle aposiopesis. The abrupt form is, of course, that constantly employed by Carlyle, of the complete, examples may be found anywhere in the proficient of the "standard" style, or in those who diverge but little from it, as in Gibbon and Macaulay earlier, Newman and Froude later. But these two last and Mr Pater (Mr Swinburne prefers the complete) also indulge to some extent in the "dying" close—the *coda* which, though in no way abrupt, and not even giving the curious suggestion of a soft breaking-off which we have called aposiopetic—suggests to the mind's ear ripples of further echo, potential if not actually audible—something corresponding to the "unheard melodies" of the poet. Of these forms the abrupt and complete will generally be embodied in an iambic or long monosyllabled ending, the others in the trochaic or short syllabled, at least in some foot possessing a strong penultimate,

whether the actual last be long or short. And it need hardly be said that by giving prominence to one or other of these, or by varying them in admixture, almost infinite further differences of rhythmical effect may be produced.

Yet another point that emerges is, that we cannot in prose, as we can in verse, lay it down that juxtapositions of particular feet are uniformly good or bad. We know that, in English verse, the anapæst seeks out the iamb, and the dactyl the trochee, as a companion or equivalent, while the substitution of dactyl for iamb, and anapæst for trochee, with the consequent juxtaposition of the two in each case, always, or almost always, leads to jangling and jarring. But this is by no means the case in prose, and the reason is obvious enough, and, in fact, directly connected with the general principle of prose-rhythm-variety. The verse-unit is more or less fixed, the prose is altogether fluid, and even if actual juxtaposition of two feet should, in itself, make an inharmonious composition, the feet that occur on either side of them will, if the composer knows his business, undertake the task of arranging a *concordat*, or an amicable separation, as best may be. In many cases, too, it would be prosaically possible, as it is not poetically, to rearrange the pair, so as to make, for instance, not a dactyl and iamb, but a long monosyllabic foot and a fourth pæon, in which there is no incompatibility nor any suspicion of jar. The looseness of the governing law of rhythm prevents the dissension which would occur under the stricter union of metre.

We may also observe, by legitimate inference, that, for the finer prose, a pretty large admixture of the bigger feet—that is to say, the four- or five-syllabled units—is all but necessary. The very inadmissibility, according at least to the system of prosody on which this book is written, of such feet in verse, supplies at once that *differentia* from verse which, on the same system, is the absolute *sine qua non* of the best numerous prose. I have arranged in my head, and could easily transfer to paper, endless schemes of unbroken dissyllabic feet, and



I find that, though effective for a short time, the composition becomes extremely monotonous, and is even in some danger of slipping into rough metre. While, if you mix trisyllabics only, the Protean blank verse will, before very long, draw you into its net. The danger can, of course, be averted by seasoning largely with monosyllabic feet, but this is a merely colourable evasion, for these monosyllables, *plus* the trisyllables, will simply and naturally make pæons, while, when added to pairs of dissyllables, they will make dochmiacs.

Lastly, there crops up a question, or more than one, as to the effect produced, in prose rhythms, by what we have sometimes called "pivotal" arrangements of the same word or words—the part played by epanaphora, epanorthosis, and other forms of repetition generally. We saw that devices of the kind formed a very large part of the method of one distinguished prose-writer of yesterday, Matthew Arnold, but it was not found by the present writer at any rate, whatever may be the case with his readers, that the effect was wholly or permanently delightful. In actual spoken oratory, or in very rhetorical written passages, epanaphora may be effective, but it is too rough and boisterous an instrument for higher prose, nor can the looser rhythm tame and train it as does the stricter metre. And, once more, it and all forms of repetition, down to the careless recurrence of a single word except in a markedly different sense, without any special rhythmical stress on it, are dangerous, because they are in a manner rebel to the same great Law of Variety. Epanaphora and similar forms of repetition are good (when not abused) in verse, because they are in accordance with its Law of Recurrence. They are bad in prose for an exactly corresponding reason.

It may seem that this is an exceeding poor and beggarly result of generalities from so long a history of the subject, and so widely thrown a netting of examples. But there is nothing against which, in course of some thirty years' writing of literary history, I have learnt to set my face more flintily than parade of systematic theory,

proceeding by elaborate rules and exceptions which for the most part are really nothing but individual phenomena catalogued and scheduled. I believe a most careful and valuable German scholar not long ago elaborated a settlement of the much-debated question, whether the Anglo-Saxon stave is reducible to a fixed scheme of accentual equivalence or not, by pointing out that it must take one of (I think) ninety-two different forms and no more. Such a result here would give me not the slightest pleasure had I attained it. Even putting aside the certainty, which my constitution of mind would impose upon me, that somebody next day would discover a ninety-third, I should, even if the whole world were actually kind enough to abstain from such a discovery, feel that there was nothing to prevent its being made, and that my ninety-two forms were forms in chalk, men in buckram. I could not even have said to any of them as Mr Carlyle is said to have remarked to a young lady, "My dear, ye're a nice phenomenon", for I should have felt that they were, too possibly, not nice phenomena at all, nothing but futile idols of an insignificant cave.

All that I have endeavoured to do has been to arrange, for the first time, I believe,<sup>1</sup> a complete survey (according to that foot system which until recently every one used, and which I myself believe to be the only one of the slightest use) of examples of actual English prose rhythm from the earliest times to the present day, and to note, where it was possible, advances and changes in the proportion and character of the rhythm itself generally.

<sup>1</sup> My friend Professor Bouton of the University of New York, who some years ago put himself for a time, as a research student at the University of Edinburgh, under my formal guidance, is, I believe, engaged upon a work concerning prose style, not identical with this, though possibly touching it in some points, but I have as yet seen none of his book. He tells me, too, that there have been scattered studies in America, but how far these also may coincide with my investigations I am again ignorant. I thought it better, in the circumstances, to work as independently as possible, with the exception, already often mentioned, of the classical pioneerism of Hurd and Mason, and of the experiments of my friend Professor Elton (see Preface), who will, I hope, publish some results of the labours he relinquished as a whole. He most kindly allowed me to see them, but, at my own request, *after* I had practically finished. Our lines, I think, are pretty parallel.

Occasionally some general suggestions, inferences, and even provisional axioms have cropped up, which I have endeavoured to summarise in this Conclusion, and to tabulate, more shortly and strikingly to the eye, in a Third Appendix. But they are only put up and forward as jury-masts or acting-officers, though I do not take quite such a gloomy view, of at least some of them, as Mr Midshipman Easy's poor friend, the master's mate, did of his "acting" appointment.

For as, even in verse, I hold that—except as to certain abstract and almost mathematical forms which admit of being filled up with wide variety—the final decision must always be left to the sensitive ear in each individual case, so, and infinitely more so, in prose, where are no such forms, or where at least the number of them is infinite, and where Variety itself is mistiess and queen—the moon that governs the waves of prose, as Order is the sun that directs the orbit of verse—the ear once more is judge. "Not worth blotting fair paper, and wasting irrevocable time, in coming to such a result as this?" It is very possible. But the work lay in my way, and I found it, and I tried to do it with such might as I had.



## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX I

### STAVE-PROSE POETRY—OSSIAN, BLAKE, WHITMAN, ETC

THREE or four years ago, in dealing with Blake's "Prophetic" Books in the *History of English Prosody*,<sup>1</sup> a promise was made which has been to some extent "implemented" (as they say in my appointed place) by this book, as well as one of return to the particular subjects specified at the head of this Appendix. But it was even there observed that these subjects only *partly* belonged to the *History of Prose Rhythm*, and they were dealt with not very grudgingly in the earlier book.<sup>2</sup> The special and continuous study of the prose division which the last two years have enabled me to give has induced me to lay even greater stress on that "partly", and I am now disposed to look upon them as belonging to a Debateable Land which is much more poetic than prosaic. I remember a great and greatly cadenced sentence of Déan, Mansel's—itself a splendid example of what we are studying in this book (*v. sup.* p. 417)—which I never saw in print, but heard from the preacher's lips some five and forty years ago in the gallery of St Mary's: "Alienated as man is from God by sin, he is yet more alienated from the Devil by humanity—that humanity of which He partook who hath no concord with Belial." And with no irreverence to the subject of this sentence, which, as I have said, is ours by right of form, I may borrow something of that form in saying that, alienated as these media are from verse by their abstinence from strict *mètre*, they are yet more alienated from prose proper by their constant observance of a definite "stave-end," entirely different in character from the closes of clauses and sentences, and making as it were a paragraph of every versicle.

This applies in some, but in a much less, degree to great

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Pros.* III 20

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* and in the context there in the special *Excursus on Ossian* (III 43), and in the chapter on "American Poets" (III 490-492)

parts of the Authorised Version Except in the Books which are definitely lyrical, and sometimes even there, paragraphing is possible, though the fact that it has been adopted by the Revisers is enough to show that it is not an improvement But to paragraph Blake is impossible, there is the sharpest difference between the actual prose and the quasi-verse parts of the "Prophecies" themselves If you paragraph *Ossian*, the frequent indulgences or slips of actual metre which were traced in the other handling, will become more obvious and uglier than ever, while the turgid poetic diction, and the misty gropings of its sense, will lose a great deal by the obliteration of the staves As for Whitman, the "catalogues," questionable at the best, will take on even more of pure burlesque than they have at present, the sometimes very artful variations from short to long will lose much of their strikingness and beauty, and the great charm of the medium—the occasional exquisiteness of the separate versicles or *paragraphidia*—will be blurred and blunted

It seems to me, therefore, that a very few observations here will be sufficient for the division, and we may include in them, without special reference, all or most of the writing that may be put in the same class—from the ineffably dreary Ossianic *pastiches* of the eighteenth century to our latest playings at Blakish and Whitmanese

It can hardly be necessary to repeat the demonstrations, given in the *History of Prosody*, that *Ossian*, at least, was an attempt much rather at a new kind of verse than at a special kind of prose, and that this attempt proceeded, to a very large extent, by the rather schoolboy process of "unrhyming" and stowing away fragments and lumps of actual metre in the pudding To me, at least, it is practically certain that one of the main causes of this attempt, as well as of its popularity, was the violent if unconscious *usus* to get at something better than—something at least different from—what Blake not so long after was to denounce in his own case, and Cowper to describe with characters of mild damnation in his—the "monotonous cadence," the "mechanic art," of the Popian couplet The innocent, if somewhat bewigged and befogged, praises of my professional ancestor, Blair, are entirely devoted to the consideration of *Ossian* as a new sort of poetry The imitators and admirers—English and German and French—all jumped at it as that and nothing else There may have been eighteenth-century persons who looked upon it as a debauch in verse, but I am quite certain that there can have been hardly any who would not have looked on it as pure lunacy if he had considered



it as prose Nor is it It may, if any one likes, be regarded as a hybrid between the two, but the difference between it, and even the most elaborate numerous prose proper of the seventeenth or the nineteenth century, is infinitely greater than that between it, and the least accomplished verse of Addison's little senate at the beginning of its own period, or the twitterings of the Dulla Cruscans at the close thereof

With Blake the gulf deepens, and indeed that description of his, which has just been referred to, puts the matter out of question He was not aiming at prose at all, but at *vers libres*—"poetry [not] fettered"—something more suitable, both in its freedom and in its complexity, for his mysterious matter In *Ossian* we have been able to discover large quantities of scarcely buried metre The feet kick more than convulsively—with a gentle even motion which is that of quite comfortable life—through the thin shroud of typographic arrangement But in Blake there is the hum of a quasi-metrical accompaniment all round the composition, we practically never get anything more tuneless than recitative, we are able constantly (and it has been done in the *History of Prosody*) to refer the measure, now to loosened and lengthened blank verse, now to Alexandrines or fourteeners treated in the same kind of way, now to irregular but quite perceptible anapæstics An exceedingly hasty or untrained judgment may feel inclined to say, "Oh! this is not verse, so it must be prose" Persons less related to the Headlong ap Headlong will probably take refuge in a safer enthymeme "Although this is extremely uncovenanted verse, it is not safe to call it prose, because there are none of the signs thereof"

The case of Whitman is not quite so much to be judged off-hand, but it is clear enough His individual staves—versicles, *paragraphia* as we ventured to call them, or anything else that anybody likes—are, by themselves and individually, in by far the larger number of cases—indeed, always (except now and then when something like a definite note of warning is usually sounded)—prose pure enough They are often very beautiful prose, worthy of the most careful scansion and appreciation such as has been given in this book But, as I have already hinted, when they are taken together, when you at once regard for purposes of observation, and analyse for purposes of experiment, their system of juxtaposition, then you perceive that something more than prose—that something different from prose—has been aimed at certainly, that it has (in measure differing no doubt according to the taste of the appreciator) been achieved And this something, the division namely of the

portions from each other, and their arrangement *en échelon*, and not in line or phalanx, at once puts them aside. The items could receive criticism according to the general principles of the book. The whole escapes us, and whether Prosody will receive it as a subject is out of our concern <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As I have mentioned Whitman, it may be asked why no other American prose writers appear. Their absence is not due to any incivility and it is not wholly due to the desirableness of economising space. The reason is that, interesting as it might be to deal say with Emerson and Poe from our point of view we should not find much if anything in them that gave us *new* observations. Emerson is practically represented by Carlyle. Poe at his best by De Quincey and even Landor, at his *not* best by Charlotte Brontë. They have, as it were, their English correspondents and do business here by them.

## APPENDIX II

### MASON ON PROSAIC NUMBERS

I HAVE referred several times in the text to the remarkable observations of John Mason, a Nonconformist minister of the middle of the eighteenth century, on the subject of this book, and though I have not given much space, for reasons of various kinds, to the scanty preceptist literature of that subject, I must make an exception in his case. Whether the tract<sup>1</sup> is actually "rare" in the technical sense I cannot say. I can only say that, when I first saw it in a catalogue some fifteen or sixteen years ago, I had never seen it even referred to before, that I have very seldom, if ever, seen a copy catalogued since, that except Mr Omond, nobody that I ever met seemed to know it till they heard of it from me, and that several of my friends have found it impossible to procure. I think this justifies the small trouble I am going to take in giving a brief abstract of it, and I shall not repent though (as once occurred in another case) somebody should start up and say that *he* had twenty copies offered him by twenty different booksellers in twenty successive days—or words to that effect.

The pamphlet is a short one of xii-76 pages in octavo, the print, except in the notes, being of a good large size and fairly "leaded." The Preface has a pleasant eighteenth-century ceremony and rotundity, regretting that "our modern Rhetoricians should lay so little stress upon a Thing which the antient

<sup>1</sup> *An Essay on the Power and Harmony of Prosaic Numbers, being a Sequel to one on the Power of Numbers and the Principles of Harmony in Poetic Compositions* (London. Printed by James Waugh for M. Cooper at the Globe in Paternoster Row, MDCCXLIX). The companion Essay appeared with the same imprint in the same year. A shorter and very practical *Essay on Elocution*, bound up with my copies of the others, and signed by John Mason, A.M. had reached its fourth edition in 1757, the date of this copy. The author (who, like most of his cloth at the time, was a private tutor and chaplain as well as a minister) lived from 1706 to 1763, and was grandson of a better known John Mason, an Anglican divine and hymn writer but an enthusiastic Millenarian and apparently a very decided "crank." Our J. M. is common sense or nothing.

Orators considered as so important," and quoting at length that remarkable person, James Geddes, who had so great an influence on contemporary philologists in the older and better sense. The text has ten chapters, and throughout, the "Numbers" of the title are translated into the adjective "numerous" applied to prose. The first chapter is occupied by a brief sketch of what the "antients" have said, and citations in opposition to the neglect of the modern rhetoricians from Pemberton,<sup>1</sup> from the *Fitzosborne's Letters* of that Melmoth who also translated Pliny, and was reduced by Johnson "to whistle,"<sup>2</sup> and from "Longinus" Smith, who, however, took the other side.

The second contains that enumeration and classification of feet as "noble" or "base" which has been referred to, discussed, and disapproved above. Then, in Chapter III he proceeds to explain how the different disposition or combination of these numbers is that which constitutes the difference between a rough and a smooth style—admitting, however, that a "rough, masculine, and vehement style" may be "numerous." He is still rather in the bondage of "generosity" and "baseness," and I am afraid his instance, as he uses it, is a fallacy of *non causa pro causa*. He rightly objects to "It is a mystery which we firmly believe the truth of and humbly adore the depth of," and rightly prefers "the truth of which we firmly believe, and the depth of which we humbly adore." But the badness of the first form does not, as he thinks, come from the "base and feeble" trochees, or the goodness of the second from its "strong and generous" iambs and anapests. It comes from the facts, first, that the postponing of the proposition, though a sound English idiom,<sup>3</sup> is a somewhat conversational and undignified one, and that "truth of," and "depth of," have a *homœoteleuton* of a kind particularly to be avoided in prose.

The fourth chapter (wrongly duplicated as "III" in the original) describes, taking Dionysius as guide,<sup>4</sup> the manner of "reducing" prosaic numbers, that is to say, of arranging them according to feet. It is curious, however, that while indulging in most unnecessary argument as to the propriety of using trisyllabic as well as dissyllabic feet, he seems to "shy at" tetrasyllabic, though his ancient authorities constantly use them. Thus, in scanning the opening passage of *Genesis*, he goes out of

<sup>1</sup> *V Hist Pros* ii 544

<sup>2</sup> *V Boswell*, Globe edition, p 520

<sup>3</sup> (Mason, wiser than some of our modern grammar book makers, partially acknowledges this.)

<sup>4</sup> Mason re-analyses the ancient analysis in a manner which is shrewd in itself, and which I should have liked to follow, but for the reasons given *sup* at Chap I p 9

his way to make (and apologise for) a dactyl and spondee  
 "In̄ the be|g̃nning|" is a shockingly bad beginning itself, "In |  
 the be|g̃nning|" or "In̄ the | be|g̃nning|" being obviously the  
 right way

Chapter V is devoted to closes, and poor Mason is much  
 disturbed by his authorities' commendations of a ditrochaic  
 ending. For if a trochee is base and weak, surely a double  
 trochee must be doubly weak and base—a sort of *Deblitado*  
*Doblado*—to adapt Thackeray. But he gets off—rather lamely  
 —by the help of the "commonness" of an end-syllable. VI  
 and VII deal respectively with "Poetic Prose" (too near to  
 metre) and "Prosaic poetry" (*i.e.* the parallelisms of Hebrew  
 literature or the set fragments of inscriptions). Under this head,  
 if he had been writing a few years later, Mason would no doubt  
 have classed *Ossian*. Chapter VIII is a long one for the book,  
 consisting chiefly of extracts, fully scanned, from Sharp, Tillotson,  
 Addison, Atterbury, Temple, and others, ending with the  
 overture of the Gospel of St John, which, however, he spoils

with *two* initial dactyls—"In̄ the be | g̃nning̃ was"—in the teeth  
 both of his own principles and of manifest rhythmical require-  
 ments<sup>1</sup>. IX contains "rules". As I find that criticism, how-  
 ever politely worded, is sometimes misunderstood, I shall simply  
 reprint them, at full or in summary, with no further remark than  
 that some of them seem to be unhappy, and a few not very  
 relevant. X ceremoniously perorates with a neat eulogium of  
 "numerous" prose generally.

The "rules" are as follows<sup>2</sup>—

I "Furnish yourself with a  *copia*  of equivalent words that  
 convey just the same idea, that you may have it in your power  
 to substitute one of a good number in the room of another that  
 is a bad one, and to choose that which best suits the rhythmus,  
 of which a good ear will soon be judge."

II "When four, five, or more short syllables come together,  
 you may part them by inserting amongst them some expletive  
 particle containing a long quantity, which, if it do not strengthen  
 the sense, will at least serve to meliorate the measure."

III "An  *ipsis [sic]*  will often help the rhythmus by con-

<sup>1</sup> Just compare this sing song with the majestic, "In̄ | the be|g̃nning̃ | was  
 the Word '!' | It is observable that he actually robs himself and his author of  
 his own "strong and generous" anapaest.

<sup>2</sup> Those between marks of quotation are quoted exactly, the others shortened  
 to their gist. The "general" additions have been less respected and are all  
 shortened, although "quoted".

tracting two syllables into one as 'tis,' 'don't'" He extends this to the omission of words or part clauses

IV "A proper use of rhetorical figures" is recommended, but largely *subruled*

V "Transposition of words" is suggested

VI Not merely a "good number," but an "emphatic word" is required at the close

VII "Remark the most beautiful closes as well as the tenderest words" in others

VIII "Let your first care be a clear and strong expression of the sentiment"

IX "Do not always use the same sort of numbers, be they ever so good"

X "Let your composition be so free, natural, and easy, that you may not seem to have any regard to your numbers at all"<sup>1</sup>

He adds a few which he calls "rules of a more general nature," though one might be inclined to call them more peculiar "Don't have two long sentences together though you may have many short", "Keep similarly sounding words far apart", "Avoid strings of genitives with 'of'", "Use alliteration now and then", "Be careful of 'w,' 's,' 'th,' etc", "Avoid, but not entirely, the frequent postponement of the proposition", and "Don't let the beginning of a word duplicate the end sound of the last"

Most of these are extremely sound, others perhaps less so, all perhaps (except II and IX), a little rudimentary as regards "numbers"

If, however, I were to exercise a pen (which has, perhaps, had some practice of the kind) in pulling Mason to pieces—as I have neither wish to do nor care for doing—I should only break its nib against the impregnable fact that he was the first, and until very recent times practically the only, critic to attack this subject in English with any fulness and on any system. He was actually a teacher of elocution, and as he was no doubt led by this to the consideration of our subject, we may readily excuse any dictum which may perhaps savour more of the actor or the *ὑποκριτής* than of the critic pure and simple. I rather doubt myself whether the very finest and most elaborate prose is not better read than heard, for while Dryden was absolutely right in asking why we should consider the mind of man less active than his senses, we may justly intensify the question by retorsion, and ask whether the senses are not actually less active and sensitive than the mind. But this is a by-problem. There is no doubt that style which is intended to be heard

<sup>1</sup> All these rules are more or less largely explained, illustrated, and commented.

has a tendency to exaggerate emphasis, and to avoid intricate rhythms

But however this may be, it was a great thing to face the idleness which would not consider these questions, and the tritcal commonplaces as to their being trivial, finicking, un-English, and so on. If he might have done more, he did much, and it is evidence of that stirring of the waters which was going on, that in the very hey-day of the "drab" style—at the very moment of the *floruit* of Conyers Middleton—a humble dissenting minister should be setting men in the path in which, eighty, and a hundred, and a hundred and thirty years later, De Quincey and Landor, and Newman and Ruskin, and Pater were to tread<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It will, perhaps, be only proper especially in face of that interesting essay of Mr Shelly's, to which I have before referred to connect the latest with the first student of Latin and English prose rhythm combined and to say a very little more about the Ciceronian and *cursus* systems of Latin prose scansion which Mr Shelly has endeavoured to adapt to the cadences of the English Prayer Book. They have recently in Germany (see Mr Clark's book (note p 9) and the authorities there mentioned) endeavoured to systematise Cicero and to show that his own admittedly desultory theory of clauses and clause endings may be thrown into three forms—

- (1) — ∪ — — ∪
- (2) — ∪ — — ∪ ∪
- (3) — ∪ — — ∪ — ∪

(=cretic or molossus+trochaic endings of this or that kind with others to be brought under these by the same classification a *outrance* which makes ninety odd forms of Anglo Saxon verse). It is again a known fact that when accentual quantification succeeded forms answering to these were definitely practised and prescribed in the Middle Ages, under the names of *cursus planus tardus*, and *velox*. A "law" has been also extracted from these by Herr Meyer, according to which there must be two three or four unaccented syllables before the last accented one in a sentence. I must not steal Mr Shelly's applications of this to English, but merely observe that "I do not agree with Paulus, though I hope he will continue his enquiries. I do not for instance, think that 'Rise to the life immortal' is in the slightest degree sufficient for an English scansion, even of the accentual kind. 'Life' cannot be slurred in such a fashion. And I ought to add that Mr Shelly himself admits it to be 'often impossible to adopt' the *cursus* rhythm 'owing to the character of the English language. I should though he does not, exclude 'many and great dangers' from any resemblance to *esse videatur*, because of the insurgence of 'great'. And if weight is to be laid on mere trochaic endings, it is to Old English, not to Latin, that we must go

## APPENDIX III

### TABLE OF AXIOMS, INFERENCES, AND SUGGESTIONS

*(It is here most earnestly reiterated that the following propositions are strictly provisional, and presented only as thoughts that have cropped up in the course of the survey of facts given in the text For Table of Feet, v sup p 16)*

1 The Rhythm of Prose, like the Metre of Verse, can, in English as well as in the classical languages, be best expressed by applying the foot-system, or system of mathematical combinations of "long" and "short" syllables

2 But a much larger number of these combinations, to be ascertained (as in the other case) only by practice, are available here, including those of four or five syllables

3 The great principle of foot arrangement in prose, and of Prose Rhythm, is Variety

4 No foot is in itself "nobler" or "baser" (*i.e.* better or worse for prose purposes) than another, though feet consisting exclusively of short syllables are somewhat rare, and have a tendency to coalesce with, and merge into, longer and heavier ones

5 Feet retain in prose their *intrinsic* character, *i.e.* the iamb gives a "rising," and the trochee a "falling" effect, the amphibrach and the Ionic *a minore*, or third pæon, an undulating or rocking movement, etc

6 But the necessity, or at any rate the great desirability, of variation in foot-arrangement somewhat interferes with the extension of these effects to rhythm-groups which, if mainly composed of one foot, would become too much like verse.

7 It is possible that, especially in certain kinds of prose of low tension, blocks of even six syllables may, by the help of something like slur, assume the position of feet



✕ 8 The scansion of prose by these feet often, if not generally, approaches that rhetorical or musical arrangement of verse which has been noticed elsewhere<sup>1</sup> But in this case there is no other

9 There is no objection to the falling of a foot-end in the middle of a word But it is less frequent in prose than in verse, and its comparative rarity perhaps furnishes one of the differences between prose- and verse-rhythm

10 A still more important difference is that in prose, except at the paragraph-end, there should be nothing corresponding to the line-break in verse Closed staves of any kind, as in *Ossian*, etc., always incline to the poetical The clause- and sentence-break is one chiefly of *sense*

11, Monosyllabic feet are of extrême importance as pivots for the turn, and stepping-stones in the progress, of English prose rhythm

✕ 12 And this peculiarity, which distinguishes English from the classical languages, is perhaps connected in some way with the great number of English monosyllabic words,

13 In fully "numerous" prose as much care should be taken of the feet in the middle of a clause or rhythm-group as of those at the beginning and end

✓ 14 The beginning is often the least prominent part in English, though it may (as shown by some examples in the text) be of great importance in summoning special attention

✓ 15 Neglect of the middle will infallibly deprive the structure of all claim to be really "numerous" A mere "filling" of undistinguished rhythm, between an emphatic beginning and end, is French rather than English, oratorical rather than literary, and always indicative of a low type with us

✓ 16 Such superior importance as belongs to the ends is one rather of connection with other ends, clause- or sentence-, in regard to the total rhythm of the sentence or paragraph, than intrinsic or peculiar

✓ 17 These ends may be abrupt, complete, or dying, emphatic or gliding off

18 In some cases there appears to be something in them

<sup>1</sup> In several passages (e.g. in 526 note) of *Hist Pros*, and more specially and explicitly *Historical Manual*, 35, 36, and 268, 269

corresponding to *catalexis* in verse—the following pause supplying what is wanted

19 But Variety, in the composition of the feet which compose these ends, is of special and paramount importance

20 Not seldom, it seems as if *gradation* in such successive end-feet—*e.g.* anapæst, iamb, long syllable—were especially powerful and grateful

21 This principle of Gradation—which is connected with the more general one of Variety—seems indeed to offer (subject to the cautions given) a key to several locks

22 It appears constantly in respect of sequences of feet in a clause—dochmiac, pæon, a trisyllable, and so on—and perhaps very specially in the concluding feet of one—anapæst, iamb, long syllable, etc

23 The gradation may be either way—from longer to shorter, or from shorter to longer

24 But something similar is often noticed in the larger units. Sentences and clauses follow in succession to each other, drawing themselves out, or shutting themselves up, like slides of a telescope, and presenting a profile like a flight of steps ascending or descending

25 These arrangements are specially prominent in what is called the Balanced style, in which pairs or batches of clauses and sentences are aligned or opposed to each other, with an antithetic and even antiphonic effect

26 But they are often noticeable also in the symphonic and polyphonic style, where the rhythm is rather continuous than antiphonally arranged, and which supplies, perhaps, the best examples of “numerous” prose

27 It is, however, possible to combine the two—as Mr. Swinburne, more particularly, has shown

28 Verses or parts of verses, which present themselves to the ear as such, are strictly to be avoided in prose, but such as break themselves into prose adjustments are permissible, and even strengthen and sweeten the “numerous” character very much.

29 In Old English, or Anglo Saxon, the rhythm is mainly trochaic

30 But in Middle English the iambic rhythm of Latin and French invades, and coalesces with, the trochee, though never suppressing or ousting it

31 In closes, especially, trochaic or amphibrachic endings are very frequent, and exceedingly effective, in the best English prose to the present day<sup>1</sup>

32 This mixture of iambic and trochaic general cadence *begets* the longer feet, and so the more varied cadences which they bring with them

33 The amphibrach itself, rare in verse, would certainly appear to be an exceedingly prevalent foot in English prose

34 Three trisyllabics—amphibrach, bacchic or anti-bacchic, and anapæst—seem in many cases to combine with special harmony

35 Each of these is also good singly, especially the anapæst, which perhaps ranks next to the amphibrach as a prose foot of three syllables The cretic occurs, but not eminently

36 The molossus, another exile from verse according to the present writer, is quite at home in prose, though it may sometimes, with advantage, be resolved into its constituent three long monosyllables

37 The tribrach is perhaps sometimes found, but it shares with the pyrrhic, and still more with the proceleusmatic, the disability referred to in Rule 4, *sup*

38 The dactyl is common enough, indeed the large number of dactylic *words* in English, and the frequency with which, in prose, foot- and word-length coincide, force its entrance

39 But it seldom combines well with a spondee or trochee after it *The "hexameter ending," in verse and prose alike, is repugnant to English*

40 In harmonious passages, especially of an emotional kind, a foot, which may be in most cases either Ionic *a minore* or third pæon, is present so frequently that it seems to be almost a specific

41 Other pæons are very common, but seem to have less of a special effect than this

<sup>1</sup>In this way the influence of Anglo Saxon *verse* on English *prose* (*v. sup* p. 10, note) may be thought to be specially probable

42 Epitrites are not uncommon, though more so than pæons. They share to some extent, as do the major Ionic, the choriamb and antispast, and the double feet, a tendency to break up and recombine. But (except the dispondees, which would certainly undergo this) all are possible and not very infrequently probable.

43 The dochmiac, in many of its numerous combinations, is one of the commonest and most useful feet in English prose. In the more accomplished specimens of the last three centuries it would often be impossible to get a satisfactory scansion if it were disallowed.

## INDEX



# INDEX

- Addison, 230 232 243 252, 256, 260  
 261, 267 271 289 290 337 350  
 362 447  
 Ælfric, 23 25 26 30 36 39, 42 72  
 104 105 115 162 218 219  
 — Bata, 30  
 Alexander Patrick 367  
 Alfred, King 23 25, 66 104  
*Amadis* translations 116 note  
*Anatomy of Melancholy The*, 165 168  
*Ancren Riwle The* 44 51, 54, 102,  
 220  
*Andreas* 28 29  
 Andrewes Bishop, 158  
*Anima Poetae* 295 300 305  
*Apollonius of Tyre* 38 40, 104 106  
 109, 219  
*Apology for Poetry* Sidney's, 139  
 — the Miltonic 170 171  
 — the Platonic 456 457 note  
 Arbuthnot, 252, 271  
*Arctadia*, the 116 note 139  
 Aristotle chap 1 *passim* 14 note  
 104 note, 118, 147, 224, 232, 244  
 392 note  
 Arnold, M 297, 400 note, 412 416  
 423, 440, 463  
*Arthur of Little Britain* 93  
 Ascham, 81, 92, 116, 119 122, 134  
 204, 205, 220, 221, 223 271  
*Astrolabe*, Chaucer's, 66, 71 72  
 Atterbury 252  
 "Aureation 111 17  
 Austen, Miss 251, 376  
 "Authorised Version, the, 73 note  
 116, 142 158  
*Autobiography* De Quincey's, 320 sq  
*Ayenbite of Inwyrt The* 53  
 Babington, Dr Ch, 76 note  
 Bacon, 132 158, 163 165 200, 205  
 446  
 Bain Professor 405  
 Balzac 271  
 Baudeville, C., v 429  
 Beaconsfield, Lord 378 380  
 Beccaria ix  
 Bentley 157 note 239 240  
*Beowulf* 10 27 28  
 Berkeley 252 254 256 267 350, 447  
 Bernard St 54  
 Berners 75 82 92 97 110 115 164  
 Besant, Sir W 82  
 Bishops Bible the 149 sq  
*Bispe, An* 52  
 Blackmore R D 441  
 Blake 31 66 343 392 note 405  
 444 note App I  
*Blacking Homilies The* 15 25 29  
 102  
 Boethius 24 25 66, 72 75  
 Bolingbroke 256 259 273 374 380  
 447  
 Bonar Mr 271  
 Bouton Professor 464 note  
 Breton N ix  
 Brontes, the 405 408  
 Brown, Tom 238 239  
 Browne Sir T 42, 101 105, 133  
 159 162 181 200, 223 237, 239  
 252 267, 280 294 325, 358 362  
 423 447  
 Bunyan 39, 88, 105 127, 239  
 Burke 42, 127 272 281, 285 288  
 290 291 294, 299 324, 337, 357  
 374 380 448  
 Burnet, T, 163 200, 223, 321  
 Burton, R 165 168, 204, 364  
 Butler, Joseph, 263  
 Byron, 297  
 Campbell (the poet) 82 113, 298  
 —, Dr George, 255  
 Capella Martianus, 15  
 Capgrave 76 80  
 Carlyle, 285, 292 note, 349 350, 364  
 370 399 402 428 461 464  
 Castellain M 205  
*Catholicum Anglicum* 111  
 Caxton, 81 82 103, 115, 217

- Chalmers Dr , 357, 358  
 Chambers Mr E K 254 255  
 Chaucer, 24 25, 39 55, 57 66 75,  
 103, 108, 109 117, 122 *note* 217  
 Cheke, Sir John, 116 118  
 Chesterfield 242 *note*, 259  
*Christian Morals*, 198 200  
*Chronicle The Anglo Saxon* 16 *note*  
 37 40 51, 104 106  
*Church Quarterly Review The* 9 *note*  
 Cicero 4 6, 9 *note*, 224 244 246, 257  
 Clarendon 166 179 204 214 216  
 Clark, Mr A C , 9 *note* 133 *note*  
 477 *note*  
 Cobbett, 105 127, 271  
 Cockayne T O , 31 *note* 41 *note*  
 Cœur de Lion Richard 56 *note*  
 Coleridge Mr Ernest 295 300  
 — S T , 42 *note* 166, 182, 281  
 311 *note*, 321, 341, 353 355 359  
 Collier Jeremy, 239 240  
*Colloquy Ælfrics* 30 31  
 Colvin Sir Sidney, 326 *note*  
*Complete Angler The* 216 *note*  
 Coquillart 112 *note*  
 Cornwall John, 57  
 Courthope Mr 248  
 Coventry 228  
 Coverdale 116 *note* 125 149 *sq*  
 Cowley, 230 231  
 Cowper 80 214  
 Cove L , 115  
 Craik, Sir H (his *English Prose*  
*Selections, notes passim*) 14 257 267  
 271 349 357  
 Cranmer 116 *note*, 125, 126  
 'Cursus' the 9 *note*, 477 *note*  
 Cynewulf The Slaying of 16 23,  
 105  
 — (the poet), 28, 29  
*Cypress Grove, The* 200
- Dante, 20, 154 341  
 Defoe 39 88, 105 127 240 241  
*De Interpretatione*, 2 *note*  
 Demetrius 2 *note* 3, 4  
 De Quincey, v, 11 *note*, 42, 176, 186  
*note* 260 273 *note*, 295, 305 21,  
 330, 331 350, 354 *note*, 391 3 406  
 425 434 *note*, 436  
*Dialogues*, Pope Gregory s, 38 *note*  
 Dickens, 380 382  
 Dictionaries, Early English Latin, 111  
 Diderot, 14  
 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2 *note*, 4  
 176 *note*, 222 314, 396  
*Discoveries* Ben Jonson s, 204 208  
 Donne, 101 133 159, 162, 163, 223,  
 237 325, 417, 423  
 "Douay" Bible, the, 149 *sq*
- Dowden Bishop 125 *note*  
*Dream Fugue*, Dr Quincey s, 310 *sq*  
 Dream of Boccaccio, 330  
 — of Euthymedes 330  
 Dreams, their influence, 311 *sq*  
 Drummond of Hawthornden 200 204  
 Dryden, 33 *note*, 41 228 233 241  
 244 248 252, 256 260 267, 272,  
 289 292 325 341 352, 355 423  
 425 147
- Eale, Professor 11 and chap 11  
*passim* 44 55 75 291  
*Ecclesiastical Polity* 134 138  
 Eliot George 408 409  
 Elton Professor 14 *note* 464 *note*  
 Emerson 472  
*Epicurean The* 298 300  
*Essay of Dramatic Poesy* 244  
*Essay on Death The*, 200  
 Ethelbald, King his grant to the  
 Bishop of Worcester 16 23 104  
*Euphues* 116 *note* 129 133, 138  
 Euphuism, 39 129 133, 138 159
- Feet of more than five syllables, 179  
*note* 191 *note* 451 478  
 — Table of, xvi  
 Feltham, Owen, 215  
 Ferrier, Miss 271  
 Fielding, 39  
 Fisher Bishop 82 97 100 111, 203,  
 217, 271 334  
 Florio, 128  
*Fontes Prose Numerosae*, 9 *note* 133  
*note*  
 Ford Emanuel, 116 *note*  
 Fortescue, Sir John, 76  
*Froissart* (Berners) 91 96  
 Froude Mr , 389, 409 411  
 Fuller, 362
- Gardner Mr James 76 *note*  
*Garden of Cyrus, The*, 183, 192 *sq* ,  
 196, 197  
 Gardner, Mr S R , 76 *note*  
 Gascoigne, 141 153  
 Gautier, Th , 203  
 Gibbon, 223, 281 285, 288, 290, 291,  
 295, 310, 374, 397, 425, 448  
 Gilpin, 294 *note*  
 Gladstone Mr , 257 *note*  
 Glanvill, 163, 200 203, 223, 224  
*Glasgow Herald, The*, 156 *note*  
 Goethe, 81  
 Goldsmith 260, 345, 362  
 Gospels, the Anglo Saxon, 59, 60  
 Gower, 39  
 Gray, 259, 284 *note*, 294 *note*  
 "Great" Bible, the, 149 *sq*.



- Greek, prose rhythm of 1 8, 15 *note*  
 — Romanes 39  
 Green, Mr Verdant 158 *note*  
 Greville, I, 101 133 140 159 161  
 162, 223 325  
 Guest Dr, 152 *note*
- Halfix 228 235 236, 257  
 Hampole 55 *note*  
 Hawkesworth 270, 350  
 Hazlitt, 358 362 434 *note*  
 Henley, Mr W E 128 306, 442  
 Hermogenes 2 *note* 6 *note*  
 Hita, the Arch priest of 131  
 Hobbes 8, 208 214 238  
 Hook Theodore 433 *note*  
 Hooker 75 122, 134 138, 180, 222  
 271 397 446, 448  
 Howell 215 216  
 Hugo, V 29 433  
*Human Nature*, 210 214  
 Hume 260 263  
 Hunt Leigh 362 364  
 Huon of Bourdeaux 93 *sq*  
 Hurd Bishop v 6 8 230 243 248,  
 266 291  
 Huxley M 441
- Imitation* translations of the, 112  
 Ingram Dr 112, 113  
*Ionia* 442  
 Irving, Edward, 358 *note*  
 Isocrates, 1 *note* 2 *note*  
 Italics *note* on, 354
- Jane Eyre* 406 408  
 Jeffrey 350, 355 356  
 Jerome St, 145, 147  
 Jocelyn of Brakelonde 56 *note*  
 Johnson, Dr, 8, 42, 89 *note* 132 193,  
 223, 232 248 263, 265 273 281,  
 288, 291 294, 387, 341, 349 357  
 374 430 432 448, 459 *note*  
 Joinville 107  
 Jonson, Ben, 8 204 208 223  
 'Junius, 257 *note*
- Keats, 295  
 Kemble J H, 25  
 Ker, Professor W P, 1x *note*, 12, 48  
*note*  
 King, Bishop 214  
 Kingsley, Charles, 311, 400 405, 425
- Lamb, Charles 128, 255, 349 350  
 362  
 Landon, 42 212 *note* 298, 305 306,  
 311, 324 341 347, 348, 350 359  
 362, 391 393 425  
 Latimer 105 120 127 128
- Latin prose rhythm of, 1 8  
 — connection with English, 9 *note*  
 133 *note*, 140 *note*, App II  
 Law 263  
 Lawrence Dr John vi 10 11 *note*  
 — Dr F 273 *note*  
*Leechdoms Anglo Saxon* 41  
 L Estrange Sir Roger, 238 239  
*Letter to a Friend A* 197 198  
*Letter to the Duke of Bedford* 278 280  
*Letter to Windham*, 257  
 Lever Charles 436 *note*  
*Life of Schiller The* 349, 365  
*Life of Wilson The* 281  
*Lilaburlero* 202  
*Lingua pedantesca* 112 *note*  
 Locke, 228, 229 238  
 Lockhart 349  
 Lonelich (or Lovelich), H 84  
 Longfellow vii *note*  
 Longinus, 2 *note* 6 8, 176 *note*, 224  
 246  
 Lyly 129 133 138 164, 222, 271  
 446  
 Lytton, the first Lord 377
- Macaulay Professor G C, 94 *note*  
 —, Lord 267 350 370 375  
 Mackintosh Sir J, 259 271 277  
 350 357 378 *note*  
*Mail Coach The English* 310 *sq*  
 Malmesbury William of 107  
 Malory 22 75 82-92 100 101 110  
 115, 217, 436  
 Mandeville Bernard de 239, 240  
 —, Sir John 39 55 62 66 83, 109  
 362  
 Mansel Dean 416 420 App I  
 Mapes, W 107  
*Marseillaise* the, 202  
 Martianus Capella 15 280  
 Mason John, v, 6 8 79 155 *note*  
 248 *note* 455-457 App II  
 Masson Professor David 200 357  
 Mayor Professor 98  
*Melbeee* Chaucer's *Tale of* 67, 68 71  
 Meredith, Mr George 285 420, 424  
 437 440  
 Middleton Conyers 230, 260 263 424  
 Milton, 92, 103 157 *note* 159 166  
 168-176, 193 223 235 237  
 Minto Professor, 164, 166  
*Montaigne Florio's*, 128  
 Moore, 298-300  
 More Sir T 122 123  
 Morley of Blackburn, Lord v  
 Morris Dr 26, 27, references to  
 his editions and *Spectimens*, chaps  
 u and iii *notes passerim*  
 — William, 91 115 325 435-437

- Morte d'Arthur*, Malory's 82 92 115  
 —, the English verse 83 87  
 Morton Canon 44 sq  
 Mummolenus, St., 11 note  
 Munday, A 116 note  
 Myers Mr F., 427
- Napier Professor 25  
 Neate, Mr Charles, 122 note  
 Newman, Cardinal 75 388 389 411  
 417 420 428  
 Nicholson Mr 63  
 Nietzsche 325 note  
 Nisbet Mr 123 note  
 Norden, Herr E 9 note  
 North Sir T 128  
 North, Christopher, see Wilson  
 John  
 Nursery rhymes, 23 note
- Oates Rev John 168, 169  
 Orpheus, the story of 24 25  
 Ossian, 31 66 343 405 App I  
 Othere 23
- Parr, Dr., 260, 274  
*Parson's Tale*, Chaucer's 67, 68  
*Paston Letters* The, 76 80 81 221  
 Paston, Margaret 81  
 Pater Mr W H., 11 note 42 162,  
 311 325, 420 426 436 439 461  
 Pattison, Rev Mark 168 note  
 Paul, Mr Kegan v  
 Peacock, T L., 376 378  
 Pecock Bishop Reginald, 12 76 80  
 110, 117 217, 226  
 Pemberton 151 note  
 Peterhouse The Master of see Ward  
 Dr A W  
*Phantastes* 441  
 Photius, 229 238  
 Pitt W., 305  
 Plato 176  
*Plutarch*, North's, 128  
 Poe Edgar 200, 472  
 Pollard Mr., 63  
 Poore, Bishop, 45  
 Pope, 41  
*Portent*, The 441  
*Prayer Book*, The, 125 127  
*Promptorium Parvulorum* 111  
 Punch, Mr 378  
 Purvey John, 59 note, 123 note  
 Pusey, Canon, 389 note
- Quantilian, chap 1 *passim*, 12 90, 104  
 147, 224 225 244, 246, 341, 396
- Raleigh, Sir Walter (I.), 101, 133 158  
 161, 223
- Religio Medici*, 193 195  
 Renan M 180 note  
*Repressor*, The 76 81  
 "Revised Version, the, 53 79 134  
 note 142 sq., 152 157  
 Rheims New Testament the 153 sq  
*Rhetoric* Aristotle's chap 1 *passim*  
 Richardson 260  
 Robert of Brunne (Manning), 55 62  
 — of Gloucester 55  
 Robertson 260 263  
 Rossetti Miss Christina, 125 note 180  
 407, 411  
 — D G., 194 note  
 Ruskin, Mr 42, 71 note, 85 179 214  
 311 325 353 382 392 400 411  
 420 425, 428  
 Rymer 239 240
- Samson Abbot 44 note 56 note  
 Savile, Sir H 158  
 Schelling Professor 205  
 Scott Sir W., 39 95 295 297  
 Septuagint, the 54 143 sq  
 Shaftesbury, 254 256
- ✓ Shakespeare 39 90 118 153 202  
 Sheffield, Lord 281 note, 284  
 ✓ Shelley P B 202, 297, 298 325  
 Shelly, Mr John, 9 note, 177 note  
 Skeat Professor 25, 35, references to  
 his *Specimens*, chap 111 and 114  
 notes *passim*  
 Sidney Sir P 138 140  
*Sigurd* pause in Kingsley, 405 note  
 Simylus 133 note  
 Smith, Adam, 260, 263 265  
 — Professor Grigory 12 note  
 — Sydney, 271, 357 375 note  
 —, William Southey on 286, 287  
 Smollett, 260  
*Solomon and Saturn* 36  
*Soul's Ward* 52  
 South, 176, 228 232 235  
 Southey, 83 note, 93 note 106 128,  
 285 287 291, 295, 349, 352  
 Spenser 19 note 92, 158  
 Sprat, 228  
 Steele 252  
 Sterne, 260
- ✓ Stevenson, Mr R L., 21, 307 note,  
 440, 441, 457  
 Sully, M de, 84  
 Surrey, 133  
*Suspiria de Profundis*, 306 319  
 Swift, 239 243, 252, 260, 271, 280,  
 290 440 447  
 ✓ Swinburne, Mr., 325, 427 435, 439,  
 461
- Taylor Jeremy, 42, 101, 133, 134,

- 159 178 181 223, 229, 237, 239,  
 303, 304 434  
 Temple Sir W, 228 232, 236 238  
 290, 423  
 ✓ Tennyson, 42, 88  
 Thackeray, 39, 272 362, 367 376,  
 382 388, 454  
 Thelwall, 451 *note*  
 Thorpe 25 38  
*Thoughts on the Present Discontents*  
 273 275  
 Thucydides 3 20 94 *note*  
 Tillotson, 228 229 232  
*Troxophilus* 120  
 Traill H D 271, 440  
 Trevisa, John of 56, 57 62 107  
 Trollope A 367  
 Tyndale 59 60 116 123 125, 149 *sq*  
  
*Urn Burial*, 184 190, 195 196, 224  
 Urquhart, Sir T 155  
*Utopia*, 122  
  
 Valenciennes Henri de 22 *note* 109  
 Vaughan, Professor 406  
 Villehardouin, 22 *note*, 54 107 109  
*Villette*, 406 408  
*Vision of St Paul The* 27  
 Vulgate the, 53, 54, 107, 108 143 *sq*  
  
 Wærferth Bishop, 38 *note*  
 Walpole Horace, 259  
 Walton Izaak 215 216, 236  
 Ward, Dr A W (Master of Peter  
 house) 171 259  
 Ward Ned, 239 *note*  
 Wardour Street language 19 *note*  
 54 435 437  
 Warner Mr 63  
 Welldon Bishop, 156  
 Whibley Mr Charles, 129  
 ✓ Whitman, 66 343 405 App I  
 Wilson John, Christopher North  
 305 306 321 324  
 — Thomas, 115 118 220 221  
*Wisdom*, the book of 54 144  
 Woodford, Samuel 8 229 *note*  
*Wooing of Our Lord The*, 51 52  
 Worcester, W, 80  
 \*Wordsworth 295 and *note*  
 Wootley Montagu Lady Mary 259  
 Wulfstan Archbishop, 37 38  
 — (Alfred's captain) 24  
 \*Wyatt 133 141  
 Wychf 55 57 62, 68 77, 107 108,  
 122, 149 *note*  
  
 Yonge Miss, 436 *note*  
 Yule Colonel, 63

THE END



By Professor GEORGE SAINTSBURY

# A HISTORY OF ENGLISH PROSODY

FROM THE TWELFTH CENTURY  
TO THE PRESENT DAY

In Three Vols 8vo

- Vol I From the Origins to Spenser 10s net  
II From Shakespeare to Crabbe 15s net  
III From Blake to Swinburne 15s net

HISTORICAL ~~MANUAL~~ OF ENGLISH PROSODY  
Crown 8vo 5s net

A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
Crown 8vo 8s 6d

DRYDEN *Library Edition* Crown 8vo 2s net *Popular*  
*Edition*, Crown 8vo, 1s 6d, Sewed, 1s *Pocket Edition*, Fcap 8vo,  
1s net [*English Men of Letters*]

---

## HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

In Six Vols Crown 8vo 7s 6d each vol

ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE BEGINNING TO  
THE NORMAN CONQUEST By STOPPORD A BROOKE, M A

ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE NORMAN CON-  
QUEST TO CHAUCER By Professor W H SCHOFIELD, Ph D

THE AGE OF CHAUCER By Professor W H SCHOFIELD,  
Ph D [*In preparation*]

ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE (1560-1665) By Professor  
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE (1660-1780)  
By EDMUND GOSSE, C B, M A

NINETEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE (1780-1900)  
By Professor GEORGE SAINTSBURY

MACMILLAN AND CO, LTD, LONDON

# A HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY

BY

W J COURTHOPE, CB,

M A, D Litt, LL D

Six vols 8vo

- Vol I The Middle Ages—The Influence of the Roman Empire—The  
Encyclopædic Education of the Church—The Feudal System  
10s net
- II The Renaissance and the Reformation Influence of the Court and  
the Universities 10s net
- III The Intellectual Conflict of the Seventeenth Century, Decadent  
Influence of the Feudal Monarchy, Growth of the National  
Genius 10s net
- IV Development and Decline of the Poetical Drama, Influence of the  
Court and the People 10s net
- V The Constitutional Compromise of the Eighteenth Century Effects  
of the Classical Renaissance, its Zenith and Decline, the Early  
Romantic Renaissance 10s net
- VI The Romantic Movement in English Poetry Effects of the French  
Revolution 10s net

THE ENGLISH POETS Selections, with Critical  
Introductions by various writers, and a General Introduc-  
tion by MATTHEW ARNOLD Edited by THOMAS HUMPHRY  
WARD, M A Crown 8vo

- Vol I Chaucer to Donne 7s 6d
- II Ben Jonson to Dryden 7s 6d
- III Addison to Blake 7s 6d
- IV Wordsworth to Tennyson (including Appendix) 8s 6d

ENGLISH PROSE Selections, with Critical Introduc-  
tions by various writers, and General Introductions to each  
Period Edited by Sir HENRY CRAIK, KCB In Five  
volumes Crown 8vo

- Vol I The Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century 7s. 6d
- II The Sixteenth Century to the Restoration 7s. 6d
- III The Seventeenth Century 7s 6d
- IV The Eighteenth Century 7s 6d
- V The Nineteenth Century 8s. 6d

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD, LONDON